

Israel okays renovations at Al Aqsa Mosque, after they're finished

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel lifted its objections Wednesday to renovation by Islamic authorities of an ancient prayer hall under Al Aqsa Mosque in Arab east Jerusalem, but only once the work had been virtually completed, officials said.

Israeli officials had threatened repeatedly over the past year to force a halt to renovation of the underground Marwani prayer hall, claiming the work was unauthorised and in violation of a status quo agreement concerning Al Aqsa Mosque compound.

But Wednesday a police spokeswoman said Israeli authorities had decided the work could go ahead.

"There was a decision to let the renovations proceed as long as they are restricted to pavement and carpeting," Linda Menuchin told AFP.

She said any other kind of construction work at the site "would be considered a violation of the status quo" and Israel could intervene.

Employees at Al Aqsa said work on the Marwani hall had been open to worshippers for months.

"All we are doing now is sealing the paving stones in the courtyard above the prayer hall," one of the workers told AFP.

The Marwani prayer hall pre-dates the Al Aqsa Mosque,

built in the eighth century, and was used to keep horses during the Crusades in the Middle Ages, earning it the nickname "Solomon's Stables."

The Al Aqsa compound was allegedly built on the site of the Second Jewish Temple, destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. The only remaining part of the temple is the Western Wall.

Israel insists it has final authority over Al Aqsa, which is located in Arab east Jerusalem, the sector occupied and illegally annexed by Israel in 1967 and which the Palestinians seek as the capital of a future state.

But Muslims say the mosque compound is under

the control of the Islamic religious authority, the Waqf.

Building in and around Al Aqsa is a volatile issue.

When Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu opened an archaeological tunnel at the foot of the compound in September 1996, Muslims erupted in protest, fearing that Jewish militants were seeking to undermine the mosque and rebuild their temple.

Palestinian street demonstrations throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip turned into running gun battles between Israeli troops and Palestinian police which left more than 80 dead, mostly Palestinian civilians.



IRANIAN PILGRIMS IN IRAQ: Iranian pilgrims perform prayers Wednesday at Imam Ali Tomb in the holy city of Najaf, 160 kilometres south of Baghdad. Ten years after the end of the Iran-Iraq war, Iranian pilgrims are returning to Iraq in such large numbers that hotels in this Shi'ite Muslim holy city have started putting up signs in Persian (AFP photo)

U.N. concerned by arrest of Iraqi Kurds in Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) told the Iranian authorities of its "grave concern" for Iraqi Kurds, members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), who have been arrested here, the agency said Wednesday.

The UNHCR said about 20 people were arrested during the past two months in the northwestern Iranian region of Orumiyyeh and in Karaj, near Tehran.

These people have refugee status and for this reason, the UNHCR has gone to the Iranian interior ministry to discuss the matter, the agency said.

The refugees are also the representatives in Iran of the KDP, one of the two main Iraqi Kurdish factions.

One Iraqi Kurd arrested during his detention and his body has been given to his family at Zivah, near Orumiyyeh, the UNHCR said.

Iran hosts about 30,000 refugees of Iraqi-Kurdish origin in camps in the northwest of the country and other 60,000 elsewhere in Iran.

Most of these Iraqi Kurds come from areas under KDP control. The Iranian press reported last week that several KDP representatives in Iran were arrested for spying for Turkey and Israel.

They include Sabri Sarvisi, one of the main advisors of KDP chief Massoud Barzani, the newspapers reported, without saying how many Iraqi Kurds were arrested or where the arrests took place.

The Iranian press said the suspects admitted spying for Israel and Turkey and "spread false information with the objective of destroying Iranian-Turkish relations."

Relations between Iran and the KDP have deteriorated, with the KDP accusing the Islamic republic of supporting the rival Kurdish faction in northern Iraq, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

The Iranian authorities have criticised the KDP for its alliance with the Turkish military, which makes incursions into northern Iraq to pursue the anti-Ankara Turkish Kurdish Labour Party. Northern Iraq has escaped Baghdad's authority since the end of the 1991 Gulf war and is controlled by the KDP and PUK, which have clashed sporadically since 1994.

Israeli defence chief heads to U.S.

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai headed for the United States Wednesday hoping to convince Washington not to pressure Israel in the stalled negotiations with the Palestinians and back its proposal for a withdrawal from Lebanon.

Mr. Mordechai was due to meet Wednesday in Florida with the special American envoy to the Middle East, Dennis Ross, who is then scheduled to fly here for a round of talks aimed at breaking the year-old stalemate in Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts, a defence ministry spokesman said.

Following his meeting with Mr. Ross and a conference of Jewish donors to Israel in Miami, Mr. Mordechai is

scheduled to fly to Washington where he will meet Friday with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Defence Secretary William Cohen, officials said.

Mr. Mordechai said before leaving that he would explain to the U.S. officials why Israel cannot accept their proposal that it hand over an additional 13 per cent of the West Bank to the Palestinians in a series of withdrawals required under interim peace agreements.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated Tuesday that he was willing only to carry out one further withdrawal from around nine per cent of the West Bank and on condition the Palestinians meet a long list of security demands.

He said that ceding anything beyond nine per cent of the territory would endanger Israel's security.

The Palestinians, who now have full or partial control of 27 per cent of the West Bank, say interim peace accords require Israel to withdraw from all but 10 per cent of the territory by the middle of this year.

Mr. Ross's mission will be to try to bridge the gap and if he fails Washington is reportedly ready to go public with his compromise proposals in a bid to force concessions from both sides.

Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Mordechai have been spearheading efforts to convince the United States not to exert such public pressure.

Arafat, Syrian FM meet on sidelines of conference

CAIRO (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat had rare talks here late Tuesday with Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Shara on the sidelines of an Arab foreign ministers' conference to discuss de-escalated Arab-Israeli peace negotiations.

Mr. Arafat, whose relations with Syria have been strained since the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian peace accords, discussed with Mr. Shara "the peace process and Israeli policies towards it," a Palestinian official said after the meeting.

Mr. Arafat met Syrian President Hafez Al Assad in 1996 on the sidelines of an Arab summit hosted by Egypt in Cairo.

Earlier on Tuesday, Mr. Arafat called for an urgent Arab summit to demand Israeli implementation of U.N. resolutions and appealed for international protection for his people against Israeli "attacks."

The twice-yearly conference has been largely devoted to Israel-bashing because of the deadlock in the peace process which the Arab countries blame on the policies of hardline Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Meanwhile, the Arab foreign ministers denounced statements by Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai who said Lebanon would suffer the consequences of rejecting an Israeli offer to pull out from south Lebanon.

"These threats are categorically rejected by all the Arabs, not only Lebanon. The Arab ministers are absolutely furious about the policies of [of Netanyahu] and his provocative and aggressive statements," Mr. Shara told reporters.

Iran says pilgrims harassed on Hajj

TEHRAN (RI) — Iran said on Wednesday that its pilgrims in Saudi Arabia had been harassed and urged Saudi authorities to prevent what it called provocations against Iranian pilgrims.

"The superintendent of the Iranian Hajj pilgrims, Hojatoleslam Mohammad Reza Shahrani, criticised the harassment of the Iranian pilgrims by 'certain suspicious and backward elements' at the Holy Shrine of Prophet Mohammad (in Medina)," the official news agency IRNA reported.

"According to reports a number of suspicious elements, in an organised manner in the past few days, have insulted Iranian pilgrims at the Holy Shrine of the Prophet, seizing their Holy Korans and prayer books forcefully. In some cases they have also forced out Iranian pilgrims from the Holy Shrine," IRNA said.

It did not elaborate on the reports or say who the "suspicious elements" were.

Iranian Radio, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation, said Mr. Reza Shahrani urged Saudi authorities to be vigilant "in the face of divisive actions by certain bigoted elements in that country" who "stand to lose from close ties between the two great countries of Iran and Saudi Arabia."

"We have consistently tried through discussions and by achieving understanding with the relevant Saudi Arabian authorities to perform our religious duties in such a way as to avoid creating any problems," he was quoted as saying.

"In exchange, we expect the Saudi government to exercise vigilance and to prevent the continuation of provocations by certain elements," he added.

IRNA said Mr. Reza Shahrani "called for calm and patience on the part of the Iranian pilgrims in the face of such malicious efforts."

Iranian television said on Wednesday that more than 41,000 Iranian pilgrims, out of around 70,000 who perform the Hajj every year, have already arrived in the Saudi Kingdom, but did not mention the reported comments by Mr. Reza Shahrani.

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No guarantees to Israel before signing peace — Lebanese PM

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, meeting with Germany's top opposition leader Wednesday, said Lebanon cannot grant Israel security guarantees before signing a peace treaty with the Jewish state.

"As far as there is no peace agreement between us and Israel, Israel cannot ask Lebanon to be bound to make security arrangements and security cooperation," Mr. Hariri said.

"If there is a peace agreement, through this agreement we will cooperate in many fields and the security will be one of them," he said during a lunch in the honour of Gerhard Schröder, head of Germany's opposition Social Democratic Party, who arrived here earlier in the day.

Israel recently proposed to implement the 1978 U.N. Security Council Resolution

425 calling for Israel's pullout from south Lebanon on condition the Beirut government take control of the area and prevent cross-border guerrilla attacks.

Lebanon and its patron Syria have rejected the Israeli demand, saying Resolution 425 requires Israel's immediate and unconditional withdrawal.

Mr. Hariri reiterated that Lebanon and Syria were ready to sign a peace accord with Israel within three months once it pulls out from south Lebanon and the Golan Heights, occupied in 1967 and illegally annexed in 1981.

"If Israel does not make peace with us, we will continue to ask everybody to push Israel toward the peace process, and we are doing our best to reach a peace agreement with Israel," Mr. Hariri said.

"But we will only be

accountable to our people. Israel wants us to be accountable toward Israel and we cannot do that," he said, referring to the Israeli demand for security guarantees.

Mr. Hariri told Mr. Schröder the "future is not certain in Israel and the future of our children is not certain, so we want to get rid of this situation. We want to live in peace."

Mr. Schröder, who will challenge Chancellor Helmut Kohl in September elections, said he was "aware of the difficult positions existing in the region... but Europe takes a strong interest in seeing peace in the region."

"Germany is in no way underestimating the role of the U.S. [in the Middle East peace process], but we still think that everything we do in the economic field can give a foundation to make peace develop in the region," he said.

Earlier on Tuesday, Mr. Arafat called for an urgent Arab summit to demand Israeli implementation of U.N. resolutions and appealed for international protection for his people against Israeli "attacks."

The twice-yearly conference has been largely devoted to Israel-bashing because of the deadlock in the peace process which the Arab countries blame on the policies of hardline Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Meanwhile, the Arab foreign ministers denounced statements by Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai who said Lebanon would suffer the consequences of rejecting an Israeli offer to pull out from south Lebanon.

"These threats are categorically rejected by all the Arabs, not only Lebanon. The Arab ministers are absolutely furious about the policies of [of Netanyahu] and his provocative and aggressive statements," Mr. Shara told reporters.

Manisa students released pending final verdict

ISTANBUL (AFP) — A Turkish court Wednesday released five high school students pending its final verdict in the infamous human rights case of the "Children of Manisa," the Anatolian news agency reported.

The State Security Court in Izmir (west) ordered their release in the opening session of a retrial of a total of 10 students from the western town of Manisa.

The five other students had

been released earlier.

The Izmir State Security Court had sentenced the students to prison terms of up to twelve and a half years for membership of an outlawed organisation more than two years ago.

The verdict was overturned by the Court of Appeals in January on the grounds of sloppy investigations, and a retrial ordered.

The students claimed they had been tortured by police

after their detention in December 1995 and their statements had been extracted under duress.

But 10 policemen charged with torturing the students were acquitted by a Manisa court earlier this month on grounds of insufficient evidence.

The case of the Children of Manisa has become a symbol for human rights violations in Turkey.

Hrawi wants presidency open to all Lebanese

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese President Elias Hrawi said he hoped that the presidency, currently monopolised by the Christian Maronite sect, becomes available to Lebanese from all confessions, Beirut newspapers reported Wednesday.

Mr. Hrawi said he hoped that "anyone carrying a Lebanese identity card... could in the future access the presidency."

He said he was also "strongly in favour of seeing the president elected directly by the people."

According to the political confessional system in Lebanon, the president should be a Christian Maronite, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim and the house speaker a Shiite Muslim. The president is elected by the parliament.

The Lebanese cabinet approved last week a bill submitted by Mr. Hrawi to allow civil marriage ceremonies in the country, but the text must still be approved by the parliament in order to become law.

The move angered Muslim and Christian clergymen from various denominations who fear that it could curtail their powers.

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JORDAN TELEVISION Tel. 773111-19 PROGRAMME TWO

Thursday Programmes
14:10 Cartoon — The Adventures of Dinky Doo
14:30 Doc. — The Animal Show
15:00 French Programmes
17:00 NBA
18:00 Drama — The Burned Bridge
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Science Magazine — A
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Big Brother
20:00 Drama — The Great
20:30 Drama — Dr. Quinn, the
21:10 The Oprah Winfrey Show
22:00 News in English
22:25 Feature film — "Hostage
for a Day"
23:59 Comedy — Never The
00:30 End of
T.N.

Friday Programmes

14:10 Cartoon — The Adventures of Dinky Doo
14:30 Wishbone
15:00 French Programmes
17:00 He Shoots, He Scores
17:30 Doc. — Blue Water
18:00 Tarzan
19:15 Educational Programme — All's La Terra
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Friends
20:00 Documentary — Life on the Internet
20:30 The American Chart Show
21:10 The Adventures of Brock County

JORDAN TIMES

22:00 News in English
22:30 Mini-series (p. 11)
23:10 Comedy — The Nanny
23:30 End of T.N.

PRAYER TIMES

04:11 Sunrise
05:28 Sunrise Doha
11:41 Dhuhr
15:11 Asr
17:54 Maghreb
19:12 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifeh, Tel. 9920740
Assembly of God Church Tel. 462785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624541
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751
Amman International Church Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 568824
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654952
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle Church Tel. 5691757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4623541

Church of Presentation, Sweifeh Tel. 9920145
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624775
The English Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4612141
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 992679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628952
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771721

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Sunny and warm weather conditions will prevail with temperatures rising significantly and winds moderately moderate to active. In Amman, it will be sunny and warm, winds northerly moderate, and very calm.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
Dr. Jum'a Abu Dhiab 75848

Dr. Khalil Jhali 740740
Dr. Walid Al Masri 567585
Dr. Yusef Rashid 757502
First pharmacy 5661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778256
Al Asma pharmacy 4627055
Nairookh pharmacy 4625672
Al Salam pharmacy 4626730
Yacoub pharmacy 4624945
Shmeisani pharmacy 467660
Najih pharmacy 467652
IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281484
Al Quds pharmacy 4624775
ZARQA:
Dr. Walid Halaseh 982709
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

First Aid Centre 4657111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Response 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Road Rescue 4621111, 4657777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Patrol 843402
Traffic Police 596390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Overseas Calls 5665800
Police Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewerage Company 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information directory assistance 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdullah Tel. Repairs 5661101

Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 4453200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 4453201

HOSPITALS

ANDMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 592159
The Islamic Abdi 56661317
Hussein Medical Centre Tel. 568613, 568659
Luzmia 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 46442816
Akileh Maternity 46424412
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Madhat, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5670771
Shmeisani Hospital 5669131
University Hospital 4645845
Al-Musharraf Hospital 56672741
Al-Ahli, Abdali 56941646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 7771013
Al-Bashir 77511126
Army, Marka 59161115
Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/81
Amal Hospital 5674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 09998525
Zarqa National Hospital 099900560
Ibn Sina Hospital 099986732
Al-Hikma Modern Hospital 09990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital 02127555

Greek Catholic Hospital 02127275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital 021247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 03514111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. 14453200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights are supplied on phone 44 (52700) or 44 (53250).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:00 ...Sana'a (RJ)
08:25 ...Bombay (RJ)
09:15 ...Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:30 ...New Delhi (RJ)
10:05 ...Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:05 ...Beirut (RJ)
10:15 ...Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
10:30 ...Colombo (RJ)
15:00 ...New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:25 ...London (RJ)
17:00 ...Jeddah (add) (RJ)
18:05 ...Athens (RJ)
18:05 ...Kuwait (RJ)
18:55 ...Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
19:05 ...Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)

19:50 ...Lamaca (RJ)
20:00 ...Jeddah (add) (RJ)
20:30 ...Jeddah (add) (RJ)
20:50 ...Cairo (RJ)
21:00 ...Jeddah (add) (RJ)
22:00 ...Jeddah (add) (RJ)
23:00 ...Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)

Other Flights

13:15 ...Riyadh (SV)
14:10 ...Sharjah (AH)
15:00 ...Doha (QR)
15:20 ...Muscat, Doha (GF)
16:00 ...Dubai (EK)
16:30 ...Rome (AZ)
20:00 ...Tel Aviv (MS)
20:10 ...Beirut (ME)
20:40 ...Cairo (MS)
23:10 ...Istanbul (TK)
23:30 ...London, Beirut (BA)

DEPARTURES

Royal Wings (RW)
(For Thursday and Friday)
07:45 ...Aqaba (RW)
09:05 ...Amman (QAIA) (RW)
09:50 ...Amman

PRINCESS BASMA OPENS SPORTS HALL: Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Wednesday attended a special ceremony held at Um Al Hussein Orphanage to mark Mother's Day. Princess Basma opened a sports hall, which was recently constructed to enable the orphanage children to participate in sports and physical fitness exercises (Petra photo)



Growing number of country's poor facing increasingly difficult livelihoods

By Nadia Mukhlis
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A 36-year-old unemployed Jordanian told investigators he killed his wife and four children because he lost hope of being able to support his family.

But this recent grisly murder has highlighted the growing problem of poverty in the Kingdom of 4.2 million people.

According to figures released recently by Minister of Social Development Mohammad Mansour, one million Jordanians are living in absolute poverty — struggling to provide daily bread.

The current figures reflect a nearly 50 per cent rise since 1992 in the number of Jordanians facing poverty, social workers said.

Most alarming, poverty — and its by-products illiteracy and malnutrition — are increasing, they added.

"Hunger and destitution are no longer an unknown phenomenon in our society," said a social worker at the state-run National Aid Fund (NAF). "Everyday, we encounter tens of examples of illiterate, destitute, hungry and poor. It makes one really wonder where society is heading."

Mr. Mansour said JD140 million was spent last year by the government and the private sector to help the poor.

The government insists that it supports over 25 per cent of the poor with monthly aid geared to the number in the family.

But many social workers say the government appears to lack

a comprehensive strategy to help ease poverty, which increased after the country launched IMF-directed economic reforms.

"Apart from poverty, we have two major challenges — the handicapped poor and orphans," said Mr. Mansour.

Only 20,000 of Jordan's 130,000 handicapped are being looked after, while 42,320 of the up to 80,000 orphans are receiving donations.

The roots of poverty in Jordan, a country with few natural resources, are diverse. It is burdened by huge foreign debts and also suffers from a population growth of 3.4 per cent a year, among the world's highest.

In addition, the country, with up to 25 per cent of its labour force unemployed according to independent estimates, had an influx of possibly 300,000 returning Jordanians because of the 1990-91 Gulf war.

These returnees helped create a construction boom but put pressure on prices and strained social services in a country where per capita income is estimated at \$1,420 a year.

The government has remained quiet on the percentage of Jordanians living in absolute poverty, a condition in which persons cannot even satisfy basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. According to 1992 figures, 5.3 per cent of Jordanians fell into this category.

Official figures show that the governorate of Ma'arra has the highest percentage of poor, 29.5 per cent of its residents, followed by the Karak govern-

orate, with 10.5 per cent.

One mother of 11, Um Hussein, said she wished for death because she was unable to provide the basic needs for her family. "We are struggling for life everyday. Why should we want to live?" she told the Jordan Times outside the NAF entrance.

"My unemployed husband once found a pharmacy prescription in the street and began using it to beg and get us money," she said.

Shamma, 50, said she and her unemployed husband live with 10 children in a two-room house that rests on cement blocks and car wheels and is covered by a roof made from pieces of tin.

"We live on what some of our neighbours give us. Food or clothes and even water," said the haggard, white-haired woman. She said her deaf husband, who worked as a porter until forced to stop because of sickness, was about 60.

Samir Ahmad, 11, said he was forced to drop out of school to help his family, a common case for many boys of his age. "My father is a sick diabetic and my mother cannot go out to work because she has to look after my seven brothers and sisters," said the street vendor.

"I had to leave school because it requires clothes, pencils, books and notebooks, which we could not afford." Heavy bureaucracy and occasional favouritism have complicated efforts to target the poor, said a ministry official.

"Poor and needy families have to undergo a societal investigation and complete

paper work that includes passing through several institutions and ministries," he said. "It takes a long time."

"We also lack figures on poverty, especially in the southern parts of the country, to be able to help those who are in real need of help" added the official.

In the last three years, bursts of unrest in several southern cities were linked to growing poverty and unemployment.

The NAF, helping 30,000 families, said it was looking into plans to raise the ceiling of monthly hand-outs to over JD60.

The Zakat (Alms) Fund, supervised by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, cares for over 500 orphans, paying them JD22.5 a month.

It is planning to set up vocational training school to help educate them and ensure future jobs.

Independent agencies have estimated that over 20 per cent of Jordanian children under 12 now suffer from malnutrition. They also reported that illiteracy among women and children working as street vendors are increasing.

Hopes for immediate benefits from Jordan's peacemaking with Israel have faded. Instead, the poor, looking to Muslim charities for aid, are fertile ground for fundamentalists questioning the status quo.

"We receive nothing from the government, but we receive JD20 a month from the mosque," Shamma said. "God is great. He does not forget us."

National agricultural strategy through 2010 ready — Khreisha

DAMASCUS (Petra) — Jordan has finalised a national agricultural development strategy for the country through the year 2010, Minister of Agriculture Mijhem Khreisha announced here Wednesday.

Addressing the opening session of a regional conference on agricultural production held in Damascus by the Rome-based U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the minister said FAO experts helped the Kingdom draw up the strategy and will assist the country in meeting its goals.

An estimated \$460 million, including \$157 million from the private sector, will be

invested in agricultural production during this period, said the minister.

The strategy, he noted, is in line with the resolutions of the World Food Summit last year and calls for certain steps to enable the country to become self-sufficient in food production.

Through this strategy, the government hopes to address poverty, ensure food security, protect natural resources and the environment, reduce the unemployment rate, create jobs for the residents of rural regions, and involve rural women in food production processes.

FAO experts visited Jordan last March and April and helped the country finalise the work on the plan, according to Mr. Khreisha.

Among the main obstacles facing Jordan in its struggle to achieve food security is the scarcity of water resources and poor rainfall, snowstorms, and droughts, he said, adding that such natural disasters create food crises for the people of the rural regions, especially those who raise sheep.

Along with the majority of Third World countries, Jordan is struggling with the problem of ensuring food security, the minister said, and there is no

alternative to seeking assistance from specialist international organisations to help them implement programmes to provide food for the growing population.

Mr. Khreisha criticised countries that link economic and social development with political stands, saying that there can be no justice when food is employed as a tool for political ends.

Mr. Khreisha said women in rural regions play a key role in food production and therefore deserve to enjoy the same social, economic and political status as men in all communities.

IAF assembling committee to defend Ma'an detainees

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The influential Islamic Action Front (IAF) party is putting together a team of lawyers to defend over 20 detainees who will be tried by the state security court for their part in last month's pro-Iraq unrest in Ma'an.

In a statement earlier this week, the IAF said it was in contact with other opposition groups to win backing for their effort to enable the defendants, who are mostly poor, to receive legal support during the trial, which is expected to start soon.

"The law stipulates that every defendant is entitled to legal counsel, and this commission, which aims at dealing with citizens' rights and freedom, will be set to do exactly that," Abdul Latif Arabiyat, IAF secretary general, said.

Hamzeh Mansour, a member of the IAF Shura Council, said an IAF committee is contacting committees of other parties to coordinate work on the commission, which comprises several lawyers who will "study the cases of all detainees and help set up a defence team to deal

with legal matters during the trial."

Police clashed with people in Ma'an on Feb. 20 after the government banned all protests and rallies. The clashes lasted for two days and resulted in the death of one man, Mohammed Khatib, 22, and the injury of more than 20 others.

Government officials said that of the over 200 people who were arrested on suspicion of inciting and taking part in the unrest, 18 remained in detention pending trial by the State Security Court.

According to Ma'an Deputy Waleed Awajan, around 25 detainees are still in jail facing charges of illegal assembly, while security forces are still arresting people in conjunction with the riots.

"We asked for the release of all detainees and thanks to His Majesty King Hussein, 29 were released, and soon after HRH Crown Prince Hassan ordered the release of 21 more," he said, adding that those released were not found to be have been implicated in the Ma'an incidents.

The first group of detainees was released on March 10, and the second group was released five days later.

"We believe that the detainees, held

now for more than five weeks, are innocent of all charges filed against them," Mr. Awajan said. He added that he and his fellow Ma'an deputies have made it a priority to call on the government to release the rest of the detainees, reopen the case file and to form a committee of experts to fully investigate the unrest and to determine the parties behind it.

"The government should hold accountable all those who abused their authority, and they should look deeper into the cause of such an event," he added.

On several occasions, Lower House deputies have pressed the government to release all Ma'an detainees, while 13 signed a petition calling for a House session to look into the impeachment of Minister of Interior Nahir Rashid for his handling of the protests.

Earlier this week, representatives of Jordan's 13 opposition parties issued a statement demanding that the government halt all measures that infringe on the people's basic rights, the release of all detainees held in conjunction with the Ma'an affair and holding those responsible for the death of Khatib accountable for their actions.

Crown Prince denies receiving Israeli redeployment draft plan

(Continued from page 1)

clarifications made in a letter to Prince Hassan following his recent threats.

Replying to a question concerning the Palestinian-Israeli peace track, Prince Hassan said: "Jordan is not a mediator nor does it represent any party but it is concerned with opening a Palestinian-Israeli dialogue that would benefit the Arab Nation."

"While Jordan is keen on protecting the independent Palestinian identity, Jordan will never accept any political or security moves taken at the expense of the Kingdom's pivotal role in the region," stressed the Crown Prince.

Regarding peace with Israel he said that he supports peace with Israel provided each party secures its own rights but not if based on sheer ideological considerations.

Replying to a question on Jordan's position regarding the settlement of refugees, Prince Hassan said: "Jordan adopts a firm stand vis-a-vis this question and is demanding that the refugees have the right to compensation or repatriation."

Asked about Jordan's participation in the Israeli-U.S.-

Turkish military exercises early this year, Prince Hassan said: "By sending a single army officer to the exercises Jordan wanted to retain ties with Turkey."

Prince Hassan called on the countries of the region to adopt a new policy based on dialogue which can safeguard their respective interests and prevent any Balkanisation of the region, adding that the question of water in the region can only be solved through regional integration and quiet diplomacy and dialogue.

Prince Hassan described the Gulf war as to have broken the

region's back saying that "we are now facing the consequences of that war."

Asked if the shadow of war in the Gulf is over, the Crown Prince said: "I don't think so because the issue has been internationalised and was preceded by a series of preparations. The danger will not be over unless this military force has been transformed into a diplomatic one."

Asked about His Majesty King Hussein's health, Prince Hassan said that the King enjoys a very good health and that he pursues his activities in an excellent manner.

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AI issues appeal on behalf of man sentenced to death

AMMAN (J.T.) — Amnesty International has issued an appeal on behalf of a man sentenced to death earlier this month and urged human rights activists to appeal to His Majesty King Hussein and the government to commute the sentence.

Mustafa Abdul Mustafa, 47, was originally sentenced to life in prison on March 16, 1997, for the February 1996 murder of Heidar Ali, 44.

According to court documents, Abdul Mustafa, a self-described healer, was visited on the day of the incident by the victim, a long-time acquaintance, for medication. The documents claim Abdul Mustafa killed Ali, a nurse and mother of four, by

poisoning her drink. After disposing of the body, he took the gold she was wearing and sold it for JD805, the court said.

Upon review of the case, however, the Court of Cassation returned it to the Criminal Court and asked for a tougher penalty. On March 3, the court, after a 20-minute session, sentenced Abdul Mustafa, this time, to death.

In a recent statement made available to the Jordan Times, AI urged activists to send appeals to the King and the government to commute the sentence to "a more humane form of punishment."

"Amnesty International does not condone violent crime and recognises the role

of governments in bringing perpetrators of such crimes to justice. However, the organisation considers the death penalty to be the ultimate cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment and a violation of the right to life, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," the statement said.

The organisation expressed its unconditional opposition to the death penalty, which "has never been shown to have a unique deterrent effect."

AI also recommended that those submitting appeals ask that the death penalty be discontinued in Jordan by the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Student bloc urges election law repeal following sweeping wins

AMMAN (J.T.) — The administration of the University of Jordan (UJ) should reconsider the "one-person, one-vote" election system in view of Islamists' securing the majority of seats after the student council elections, according to Mo-tassem Abu Darr, a prominent Islamist student leader and head of the last year's student council.

Despite the new, controversial electoral system — alleged by many as specifically directed against the Islamists' hold on the council — the Islamist bloc and allied student candidates won 51 out of 80 seats in Monday's elections. The nationalists along with the independents bagged the other 29 seats.

During an address to a large crowd of supporters in front of the university administration building, Islamist student leaders thanked them for giving the bloc a majority while alleging that the new voting system threatened to split the student community along ethnic and tribal lines.

"For the first time since the inception of elected student councils, the students were being influenced by family, ethnic and tribal pressures to vote for specific candidates. This clearly demonstrates the harm that the new 'one-person, one vote' system can do to the student community," Mr. Abu Darr told Jordan Times.

"Despite this new law, they [the administration] have not managed to deny us [the Islamist bloc] a majority in the council. So for the good of the university and the entire student community, we urge them to repeal this law. It can do a lot of harm to the unity of the student body," he said.

The dean of Student Affairs, Salman Bdour, could not be reached for comment.

Islamists have completely dominated the student council at the University of Jordan since its inception in 1990. However, the results from this year do not match the hold they had over the council last year, when they controlled 71 out of 80 seats.

what's going on

FILMS

* "Divine Words" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabel Amman on Thursday at 4:30 p.m.
* "The Italian Artist Gutuso — 1912" at Darat Al Funn, Jabel Weibdeh on Thursday at 5:30 p.m. (presented and commented on in Arabic by Dr. Mazen Asfour).

* "Apollo 13" at the American Center, Abdoun, on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.

AMMAN INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL

Thursday
* Palestinian play "Deaths and the Maiden" and Jordanian play "The Memory of Three Boxes" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 7:30 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. respectively.

Friday
* Palestinian play "Eed Qandeel" at Osama Mashini Theatre at 6:00 p.m.

* Palestinian play "Death and the Maiden" and Jordanian play "The Memory of Three Boxes" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 7:30 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. respectively.

EXHIBITIONS

* Paintings on handmade paper at Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Sagra St. (Tel. 5699141/2), until April 25.

* "Colours of Life" at Books@Cafe (Tel. 837931/2), until March 31.

* Works by late Iraqi artist Seddiq Ahmad at Hammurabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5695027), until March 29.

* Works by Sana Kayyali at Orient Gallery, Shmeisani (Tel. 5681303/4), until March 26. (Proceeds will go to Al Quds Al Sharif Defending Association).

* Works by Jordanian artist Yousef Baddawi at Darat Al Funn, Jabel Weibdeh, until April 9 (Tel. 4643251/2). Also displaying a private collection of Mamdouh Bishara entitled "A Vision, An Identity" and works by contemporary Arab artists — "The New Collection."

Clinton arrives in Rwanda, still recovering from genocide

KIGALI (AFP) — U.S. President Bill Clinton arrived Wednesday for a two-hour visit to ethnically troubled Rwanda, with plans to pay tribute to the victims of the central African country's 1994 genocide.

Mr. Clinton and his entourage touched down at Kigali airport aboard Air Force One at 9:45 a.m. (0745 GMT), flying into a controversy over whether he should lay a wreath at a specially built memorial to those slaughtered.

The American leader, undertaking an unprecedentedly long African tour, was met by President Pasteur Bizimungu and Vice President Paul Kagame, as well as two small girls who gave Mr. Clinton and his wife Hillary bouquets of flowers.

The U.S. president then

headed for the airport lounge and private talks with Mr. Bizimungu, a member of Rwanda's Hutu ethnic majority.

He also held talks with Mr. Kagame, the Tutsi strongman whose ex-rebels ousted a Hutu regime in July 1994, after the genocide of between 500,000 and 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus mainly by then government troops and extremist Hutu youth militias.

Before leaving Uganda's Entebbe airport for Rwanda, Mr. Clinton told reporters that the aim of his brief stop-over was to help "avoid further killing on ethnic lines and bring the attention of the world to this in a way that will have an impact on ethnic conflicts in other parts of the world."

Mr. Clinton was due to

give a speech along these lines at Kigali airport, but had no plan to leave the facility, where children had lined the runway to greet him.

Banners at the terminal building read: "President Clinton, you are welcome to Rwanda." "The people of Rwanda are happy to welcome President Clinton" and "Long live American-Rwandan friendship."

Such greetings and a ceremony involving traditional dancers and drummers could not, however, mask a row over Mr. Clinton's tribute to genocide victims. U.S. officials had earlier said he would not lay a wreath at the airport monument, citing security reasons, though he had brought a plaque.

He did receive, nevertheless, testimony from

Rwandan survivors of the genocide — groups of whom were variously said, prior to Mr. Clinton's arrival, to have been offended either by the expected spurning of the monument or by the fact that such a memorial had been purpose-built within the airport perimeter, where none of the mass slaughter took place.

In his speech, Mr. Clinton would announce new measures to prevent a repetition of the genocide, U.S. officials said. These involve an outlay by Washington of some \$40 million, mainly to help establish a proper judicial system in the region.

Rwanda was not only traumatised by the genocide, but saw its legal system left virtually in chaos, along with the rest of the administration.



U.S. President Bill Clinton and Rwandan President Pasteur Bizimungu (left) look at a statue presented to Mr. Clinton that is a miniature of a genocide memorial at the Kigali airport. Mr. Clinton was presented the statue after meeting with survivors during a brief visit at Rwanda's Kigali Airport (Reuters photo)

Yeltsin hosts Chirac, Kohl amid new political upheaval in Russia

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin plays host Thursday in a forest south of Moscow to France's Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in an informal summit.

The meeting is supposed to mark Russia's stronger links to Europe, but risks being overshadowed by the latest political upheavals in Moscow in the wake of Mr. Yeltsin's comprehensive government reshuffle.

The talks are to be held at Sosnovy Bor, a former vacation centre for the Soviet electrification ministry built at the end of the Stalin era in a pinewood 47 kilometres from Moscow.

The summit had been scheduled for Yekaterinburg in the Urals, Mr. Yeltsin's birthplace and former political stronghold, and was to include a symbolic trip to the line marking the geographical border between Asia and Europe.

But the talks were switched to the Moscow area at the last minute when Mr. Yeltsin's doctors advised him not to travel following his recent illness.

Mr. Yeltsin met Wednesday with advisers at his country residence outside Moscow to prepare for the summit, Interfax said, quoting a presidential spokesman.

The summit is scheduled to last just two hours, from 10 a.m. to midday (0700 to 0900 GMT) followed by a lunch and a joint press conference. But the participants will be unable to avoid discussing the latest political developments in Russia.

Mr. Yeltsin returned to the Kremlin from his sickbed Monday, and promptly

sacked Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and his entire cabinet in a move apparently designed to reassert the president's authority.

Mr. Kohl and Mr. Chirac will therefore be greeted at the airport late Wednesday by the extremely new face of acting Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko, 35, who is in the process of forming a new government.

The foreign ministries in Bonn and Paris have played down the upheaval, saying it was a domestic matter and what matters is Mr. Yeltsin's repeated determination to push through economic reforms.

But government sources quoted by Interfax news agency said Mr. Yeltsin would be revealing the reasons for his move and the possible choices to fill the new cabinet.

Also expected to be raised

Kiriyenko says meteoric political rise terrifying

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia's new reformist acting premier Sergei Kiriyenko admitted that his rapid political rise was "terrifying" and that the tasks facing the next government are daunting, a newspaper said Wednesday.

Mr. Kiriyenko, who was given a week to draw up a cabinet Monday after President Boris Yeltsin dramatically sacked the government, told Izvestia that his meteoric rise was "terrifying, really terrifying."

"But fear is not always a bad thing," he added in a front page interview, adding that it was the new and huge tasks ahead of him which gave him most concern.

"From an economic point of view, the situation in the country is very difficult," he warned. "Wage arrears are growing again, there is a serious situation with the pension fund, the falling oil and gas price to not reflect well on our current account balance and budget revenues."

Mr. Kiriyenko, 35, was energy minister before Mr. Yeltsin plucked him from relative obscurity to become first deputy prime minister and acting premier to inject fresh energy and enthusiasm into the Russian executive.

Earl Spencer vows to carry on Diana's crusade against landmines

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Earl Spencer, brother of the late Princess Diana, said Wednesday he was moved by his sister's legacy to carry on her crusade against landmines.

"I will feel when I get on that aeroplane that I will have fulfilled some form of unwritten obligation to her," the earl said while visiting a workshop in Phnom Penh run by the Cambodia Trust, a British charity that assists landmine victims with prosthetics.

The earl, in Cambodia on a three-day visit for the trust, is to be guest of honour at a graduation ceremony for students from a three-year class in artificial limb fitting sponsored by the organisation.

Princess Diana was to have visited Cambodia last year to highlight the scourge of landmines but was forced to cancel her trip due to security reasons.

The earl said he felt his sister would have wanted him to take her place.

"I had a feeling of unfinished business really, that for some reason she wanted me to do Cambodia," he said in brief remarks to reporters.

He added that support for the Cambodia Trust — one of many charities to contact him following Diana's death in a Paris car accident last year — "just seemed to fit" because of his sister's work.

The earl also noted that one of his professors at Oxford served on the board of the charity which was founded there in 1989 to facilitate development in this war-torn country.

Cambodia is one of the world's most heavily mined countries with an estimated four to six million buried in its soil.

Around 50,000 Cambodians — one in every 250 of the population — have lost a limb to the devices, according to statistics from relief agencies.

Diana's high-profile support of the campaign was considered instrumental in the signing last December of an international treaty banning anti-personnel landmines.

Cambodia is a signatory to the treaty which will take effect once 40 countries ratify it.

Papon trial faces new delay after death of wife

BORDEAUX, France (AFP) — Two days before a long-awaited verdict in Maurice Papon's more than five-month trial for World War II crimes against humanity, the case faced yet another delay Wednesday following the death of his 89-year-old wife.

A verdict in the trial of the 87-year-old former French official, already suspended several times due to his ill health, had been expected Friday.

But judicial sources said the trial now may be adjourned until Monday or Tuesday, with a verdict at the end of next week.

Mr. Papon is the first French official to face trial for crimes against humanity for his role in the 1942-1944 deportation of more than 1,500 Jews who died in Nazi camps.

His chief counsel Jean-Marc Varaut said Pauline Papon's death "necessarily interrupts the trial", while lawyers acting for relatives of those who perished in Nazi camps said they would not oppose a suspension to allow Mr. Papon to attend the funeral.

Mr. Papon held the number two job at the Bordeaux prefecture and was in charge of "Jewish affairs" for the Vichy regime that collaborated with the German occupation forces.

Presiding Judge Jean-Louis Castagnede will take a decision Wednesday at 2:00 p.m. (1300 GMT), when the trial was scheduled to resume with Ms. Varaut going into the second day of three days of closing arguments to the court.

Mr. Papon meanwhile arrived home in the Paris suburb of Grez-Neaumesville, where his wife died. The villa in large wooded grounds was blocked off by police.

Married to Mr. Papon in 1932, she had been seriously ill with cancer for

several months. She had called emergency medical services overnight, and firemen who entered the house found her dead. The couple have three children.

"Maurice Papon is in great distress and felt an immediate need to go home, accompanied by his children," another of his lawyers, Francis Vuillemin said.

It took 15 years to bring Mr. Papon to trial and the hearings, which began in October, were initially to have closed with a verdict before Christmas. But ill health and wrangling over procedure have dragged it out a further two months.

Lawyers acting for civil plaintiffs in the case said they would raise no objection to a new suspension.

"We have always fought to win recognition for the fact that people died and were never buried," said lawyer Gerard Boulanger. "It would not be right for us to speak out at a time when the accused's wife is to be buried."

Michel Zaoui, also defending Jewish victims of the war, said the trial would now depend on "the way Maurice Papon responds psychologically."

"He appears to be very strong psychologically and physically but there are some strong people who suddenly pack up. Anything is possible now."

He said there was a danger in suspending the hearings "because you can never tell how long it will last."

"It's a terrible blow," Mr. Zaoui added on Bordeaux radio. "First of all for a man who has just lost his wife. A defendant for crimes against humanity is above all a man, hurt by the loss of his wife."

The prosecution last week called for a 20-year sentence against Mr. Papon.

WFP begins Burundi airlift to feed 37,000 children

BUJUMBURA (R) — The U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) said Wednesday it had begun an airlift to feed 37,000 malnourished children in strife-torn Burundi.

The first flight, a Boeing-707 carrying 34 tonnes of powdered milk from the Tanzanian capital Dar Es Salaam, arrived in Bujumbura this morning. WFP Burundi representative Jean-Luc Siblot told Reuters.

Mr. Siblot said Wednesday's flight was the first of 20 scheduled to deliver 600 metric tonnes of powdered milk, sugar, oil and bean seeds over a 10-day period.

Mr. Siblot said some 300,000 people in Burundi are facing "major food shortages," but the airlift was targeting those most affected by malnutrition.

"The target population is 37,000 children at 111 supplementary and therapeutic feeding centres," Mr. Siblot said.

Mr. Siblot said the agency's food stocks in Burundi were low because

heavy rains blamed on the El Niño weather phenomenon had cut off humanitarian food supply routes from Tanzania and Rwanda.

The main (land) route from Tanzania has been cut off, and we are now relying on nothing but the corridor from Kampala to Kigali, which brings in 1,500 tonnes of food per month, which is less than a third of what we had planned to import since the beginning of 1998," Mr. Siblot said.

WFP officials in Bujumbura said the airlift was originally scheduled to begin Tuesday, but was delayed because of the arrival of U.S. President Bill Clinton in Uganda where the Boeing-707 had been transiting.

A statement issued by WFP in Nairobi said the operation was the first large-scale airlift of food to the central African country since 1994.

The airlift is funded by the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) at a cost of \$500,000, the statement said.

Huge earthquake shakes Antarctic

SYDNEY (AFP) — The biggest earthquake recorded in the world this year, measuring 8.0 on the Richter scale, Wednesday shook the remotest Antarctic, geologists said.

Quake monitoring instruments leaped off the scale after tumbler in New Zealand's Antarctic Territory.

The massive quake struck at 2.11 p.m. (0311 GMT) in the Balleny Islands region, about 2,630 kilometres south-west of Christchurch, the Australian Geological Survey Organisation (AGSO) said.

"This is a once in a year earthquake," seismologist Kevin McCue told AFP. "This is the largest in the world so far this year and the largest ever we know about in this region, but we don't expect there to have been any damage because there is nothing there."

The Antarctica population is limited to scientific research stations. "Other than that, it's just penguins," Ms. McCue said.

The Balleny's, 400 kilometres off the Ross Ice Shelf, are so remote that one turn-of-the-century explorer described them "as the most godforsaken place on earth."

The ice shelf itself, formed by several glaciers in the Ross Sea, is the world's southernmost active volcano.

The closest humans are scientific crews spending the winter at the French Base of Dumont D'Urville, 1,100 kilometres to the west, and New Zealand's Scott Base, 1,100 kilometres south.

The New Zealand base at nearby Cape Adare and the Italian base at Terra Nova Bay are both closed for winter.

Scott Base science officer Herm Binny told AFP by telephone that none at the base felt the quake, but she saw it hit the instruments.

"It was a shake of considerable magnitude," she said.

"It was huge. The moment it hit, it went straight off the scale. It was incredibly spectacular on the charts."

She said Scott and the nearby United States McMurdo Sound base were "basically aseismic."

Ms. Binny knows what a big quake feels like: two years ago she was on New Zealand's Raoul Island when a quake that hit 7.2 on the Richter scale hit.

"It was amazing. I was under the table and heard the island splitting."

The AGSO was monitoring tidal gauges and said there was a "slight chance" of a small tidal wave hitting the Australian state of Tasmania, but it was predicted to be 10 millimetres at most.

The quake hit half an hour after another in the Banda Sea, Indonesia, which was felt in the northern Australian town of Darwin.

It occurred at 1.44 p.m. (0244 GMT) north of Timor Island, registering 6.0 on the Richter scale.

"That was about magnitude six and shallow (about five kilometres deep)," Ms. McCue said.

"Too small to have done any damage or cause a tsunami, but it was felt by quite a few people in Darwin."

The largest earthquakes ever recorded hit 8.9 on the Richter scale, according to the Times Atlas of the World.

Oklahoma bombing conspirator says he would die to bring back victims

KANSAS CITY, Missouri (AFP) — Convicted Oklahoma City bombing conspirator Terry Nichols has said he would give his life if he could bring back the 168 people who died in the 1995 federal building blast.

Nichols, who returns to a Denver, Colorado, courtroom Wednesday, sent a 16-page letter to federal judge Richard Matsch Monday. The letter said Nichols "never wanted to harm or kill anyone or to damage or destroy any buildings."

A jury in January convicted Nichols of conspiracy and involuntary manslaughter.

The jury could not agree on whether to sentence Nichols to death, so judge Matsch must set the prison sentence.

Judge Matsch is expected Wednesday to set a sentencing date, hear argu-

ments on sentencing guidelines, consider Nichols' motion for a new trial and decide whether bombing survivors and relatives can testify at Nichols' sentencing.

Nichols, 42, did not testify at his three-month trial.

In his letter to judge Matsch, Mr. Nichols said testimony about those who died in the blast "hurts me deep inside" and made his eyes fill with tears.

"This may sound hollow and superficial to some, but I am sincere when I say that I would give up my life if it would bring back all those that died in the bombing, especially the children," Nichols wrote judge Matsch.

Nichols is asking judge Matsch for less than a life sentence, but he is not specific. Prosecutors want a life sentence without parole.

"Please, all I want is to

have my children to have their daddy with them and Marife (Nichols' Philippine-born wife) to have her husband for the love and support of a complete family," Nichols wrote.

Nichols was accused of helping Timothy McVeigh build a fuel-and-fertiliser truck bomb that Timothy McVeigh delivered to Oklahoma. Nichols said in the Matsch letter that he did not think Timothy McVeigh was plotting a deadly attack.

A jury convicted Timothy McVeigh of murder and conspiracy and sentenced him to death. Nichols was acquitted of murder charges but is expected to be tried on state murder charges in Oklahoma.

More than 500 additional people were injured in the April 19, 1995 bombing, the worst terror attack on U.S. soil.

Taiwan civil aviation chief resigns over fatal crashes

TAIPEI (AFP) — The head of Taiwan's civil aviation authority resigned Wednesday to take responsibility for two crashes in the past two months in which 215 people died.

The transportation and communications ministry has approved the resignation of Tsai Tui as director of the Civil Aeronautics Administration.

Chang Yu-Hui, secretary-general of the Executive Yuan (cabinet), told a press

conference. The post will be filled by vice transportation and communications Minister Chang Chia-Chu until Mr. Tsai's successor is appointed.

Mr. Tsai initially offered his resignation shortly after the island's worst air disaster but was asked to stay on.

A China Airlines Airbus ploughed into a row of houses outside Chiang Kai-Shek International Airport on Feb. 16, killing

196 passengers and crew. Six others perished on the ground.

On March 18, a Formosa Airlines SAAB 340 with 13 passengers and crew aboard crashed into the Taiwan Straits two minutes after it took off from Hsinchu.

Transportation and Communications Minister Tsai Chao-Yang managed to keep his post despite mounting pressure from the media and the parliament.

But Premier Vincent Siew told parliament Tuesday the minister would be sacked unless he could improve flight safety before the end of June.

Mr. Siew said he would ask "Tsai Chao-Yang to assume full responsibility" if the public continues to complain about domestic flight safety.

The board of China Airlines has approved the resignation of Fu Chuan-Fan as president.

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Indian rescuers search for survivors after tornado kills over 120

MIDNAPORE, India (AFP) — Rescuers searched for survivors in two eastern Indian states Wednesday, a day after a tornado killed at least 120 people, left hundreds missing and injured hundreds more, state officials said.

Hundreds of volunteers have fanned out across five villages in West Bengal to sift through debris and rescue survivors, said A.K. Bal, administrative head of Midnapore, a crowded district in the coastal state.

"We think at least 1,000 houses — mostly mud-and-brick structures — have been flattened or damaged," Mr. Bal told AFP by telephone. "Several schools have fallen down."

Earlier Suhash Haldar, a police official in Midnapore, said 500 people were missing after Tuesday's tornado devastated rural areas in West Bengal and in the adjoining state of Orissa, where three villages were destroyed.

"In the morning we recovered the bodies of 40 schoolchildren who died after their school building collapsed," Mr. Haldar said Wednesday.

Other 80 people were killed and hundreds injured when the twister, with a wind speed of 500 kilometres an hour, hit Midnapore and nearby areas in Orissa, state officials told domestic news agencies.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) quoted an unidentified official as saying that some 10,000 people were still feared trapped under debris.

It quoted witnesses as saying the tornado had swept a bus off a highway, causing many injuries.

West Bengal police chief Dipak Sanyal said there was no electricity in Midnapore. PTI said 25 people of the 120 victims came from a cluster of villages in the Balasore district of Orissa, adding that 16 of the dead were children.

The search for more survivors had been hampered by torrential rains following the tornado, which also left 10,000 cattle dead in the two states.

The tornado ravaged three villages and badly damaged a school in Orissa, destroying three classrooms and killing the headmaster.

An Indian Airlines Boeing-737 carrying 114 people made an emergency landing late Tuesday in the Orissa capital Bhubaneswar as the weather worsened, a news report said.

Tornadoes and floods are common on India's eastern coast. Storms regularly brew in the neighbouring Bay of Bengal.

In November, a cyclone in the state of Andhra Pradesh killed 32 people, the worst natural disaster in the state since 1977 when some 10,000 people died in another cyclone.



A student is lead out of the Westside Middle School after a counseling session to deal with the aftermath of two youths who began a shooting spree, killing four girls and injuring 12 in Jonesboro. A teacher died in a hospital later in the day (Reuters photo)

Small Arkansas town shell-shocked after deadly shooting rampage

JONESBORO, Arkansas (AFP) — This farming town was shell-shocked Wednesday as police probed why two heavily armed boys apparently fired into a crowd at a local school, killing five people and wounding 10 others.

The boys, one aged 11 or 12 and the other 13, were being held in Craighead County Juvenile Detention Centre following their arrest Tuesday near Westside Middle School, located just outside this northeastern Arkansas town of 51,000 people.

The names of the suspects were not released because they are minors. Officials were unable to confirm whether they were students at the school.

Authorities said students and teachers were apparently lured outside by a false fire alarm, at which point the camouflage-clad boys opened fire with rifles and pistols, killing four girls and a woman teacher. Reports said a third suspect might have triggered the alarm.

"I heard some pop (sound) and then I saw Nathalie fall ahead of me," said 11-year-old Josh Bennett, a sixth grader who was unharmed during the shooting. "She was crawling and had blood all over. I just kept on running."

Late Tuesday students and parents received counselling in the school's gymnasium where a candlelight vigil was also held.

"We're going to watch them for the next few days to see how they react," said Roy Bennett, as he comforted his two boys who heard the shots from the nearby elementary school. "I don't think it has sunk in for them yet."

Most residents interviewed shook their heads in disbelief, unable to comprehend how two boys could have committed such a horrendous crime.

Authorities seized nine rifles and pistols as well as knives in a nearby van.

In Arkansas, it is not illegal for minors to be in possession of rifles or shotguns, but those under 21 years of age cannot carry handguns.

"Drugs could have a lot to do with it," said town resident Donna Casey. "There's a lot of acid going on around here."

Among other possible motives, some locals pointed to reports that one of the boys had recently been reprimanded in school. Others said one boy had been rejected by his girlfriend.

Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee expressed "shock and dismay," adding: "We have to be very angry at the culture that produces this kind of response in an 11-year-old."

Meanwhile a spokeswoman at Saint Bernard Regional Medical Centre said two of the six girls still hospitalised were in critical condition.

She added that Shannon Wright — one of two women teachers wounded along with nine pupils aged between 11 and 13 — had died.

Teacher Sarah Therford had been upgraded from critical to stable condition, the spokeswoman said, adding that three other girls were also in stable condition.

Classes at the school were cancelled for Wednesday.

The incident, the third fatal shooting at U.S. schools in five months and the fourth such attack overall, shocked the nation, where classroom violence has become an increasingly serious problem.

President Bill Clinton, who is on a tour of Africa, expressed horror at the shooting in his home state, saying he and First Lady Hillary Clinton were "deeply shocked and heartbroken."

"We don't know now and we may never fully understand what could have driven two youths to deliberately shoot into a crowd of their classmates," Mr. Clinton said in a statement issued in Uganda.

Tuesday's shooting was eerily similar to a Dec. 15 incident in which a sniper hidden in the woods in Stamps, Arkansas, shot and wounded two students standing outside their high school before classes began.

Neither of the teenage victims sustained life-threatening injuries, and the sheriff in the southern Arkansas town said they appeared to have been targeted randomly.

Contact Group opens key meeting on Kosovo

BONN (AFP) — The six-nation Contact Group met here Wednesday seeking to close ranks, mainly over Russian reservations, to put pressure on Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic in the Kosovo crisis, diplomats said.

It was not clear if Russia, which has opposed sanctions on Yugoslavia, would go along with the hard line the United States and its European allies Britain, France, Germany and Italy seem to have agreed on, said the diplomats.

"It is clear that Milosevic has not made sufficient moves" towards negotiations with separatist ethnic Albanians in the southern Serbian province of Kosovo, a French diplomat said.

A brutal Serbian crackdown this month on ethnic Albanians who make up 90 per cent of the population in Kosovo has left at least 80 people dead.

The fighting was apparently continuing as the Yugoslav agency Tanjug said Wednesday that two Albanians and one policeman were killed in clashes between Serbian police and Albanian "terrorists" Tuesday in the western Kosovo region of Decani.

The French diplomat said the Contact Group would be moving towards "a strategy of pressure and of threats" at its meeting in Bonn, following up on measures already decided at a meeting the six nations held in London on March 9.

The goal is "the immediate opening of a dialogue" between the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo and Yugoslav authorities, the diplomat said, in comments confirmed by other participants.

But it was not clear if this meant sanctions, particularly as Russia now opposes the hardest measures that were agreed on in London — an arms embargo on Yugoslavia and blocking the shipment of material that could be used for repressive actions.

The New York Times reported Wednesday that Russia had agreed in principle to sell Yugoslavia tanks, attack helicopters and ground-to-air missiles in a move that could threaten peace in the Balkans.

Quoting U.S. officials, the report said the deal, also including spare parts, was arranged in Moscow in December. It was not made public, and U.S. authorities did not know how many weapons were involved or might already have been delivered.

"The Russian weapons will put Yugoslavia in violation of the Dayton agreement which ended the fighting in Bosnia," the report quoted a U.S. official with the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as saying.

President Bill Clinton's administration has objected to the deal in meetings with Russian officials, the report quoted a State Department official as saying.

But the administration has "sought to keep (the deal) from becoming a public issue," it added.

In Bonn, the United States and its European allies have apparently closed ranks after U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who was chairing the meeting, had said upon arriving in Germany Tuesday that she would press her European counterparts to maintain a firm stance against Belgrade.

Before the Contact Group meeting she held separate talks with German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel and French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine.

Mr. Kinkel met Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov Wednesday.

Mrs. Albright had met with the Russian Tuesday evening.

Diplomats said there was apparently an opening for talks as ethnic Albanians have held elections in Kosovo. Mr. Milosevic has agreed to let ethnic Albanians return to university in the Kosovo capital Pristina and the Kosovo separatists may be ready to talk with Yugoslav authorities directly, dropping their demand for a third party to be present.

Belgrade was, however, still rejecting mediation by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The Contact Group states' foreign ministers are also to meet Wednesday with the foreign ministers of eight nations in the Balkans region — Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Slovenia and Turkey — to discuss how sanctions would affect them economically.

These regional countries may also be the ones involved in eventual measures such as monitoring of borders, diplomats said.

Thousands dead in drought-stricken Indonesian province

JAKARTA (AFP) — Drought in Indonesia's remote Irian Jaya province has killed thousands of people and more are dying, foreign aid workers said Wednesday.

Most of the dead are highland tribespeople who succumbed to malnutrition or hunger-related illness, or died from malaria contracted as temperatures rose.

Emergency food and medical aid has reached only 15,000 of the 90,000 people at risk, according to officials.

"But there would be villages of 200 inhabitants, with 30 dead in one month," said International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) official Ferenc Mayer, speaking in Jakarta on arrival from the eastern province.

"The total number of dead will never be known," he told AFP, saying that some remote settlements could be seen from the air but could not be checked. "We must imagine they are dead also."

He said "More than 1,000 are dead, definitely, many more."

Many of the dead were children or the elderly, he added.

In some villages, every inhabitant had malaria and 60 to 95 per cent were suffering from "moderate-to-severe malnutrition."

Sayer said an ICRC nutritionist taking part in emergency operations in the province said the crisis was as bad as the worst moments of famines in Ethiopia and Somalia.

Another foreign aid worker who had been in the region said the official toll covered only those who died in major centres and not the hundreds of remote highland villages where most of the 420,000 inhabitants of central Irian Jaya live.

"The official figure is 650 but it is much more than that," said Hans Fannord of the Worldwide Fund for Nature. "You could say thousands. There is a huge logistics problem. It's just a mess."

Philippe Delonge of the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) said rain had fallen after a drought which began early last year but that massive problems remained.

"The highland area is in a critical condition," added the official. "It's not really drought any more, but it is critical." Aid officials said sweet potato crops, which account for more than 90 per cent of calorie intake for tribespeople, had been destroyed by drought and could take up to nine months to yield fresh produce.

New Zealand scientists identify key stomach cancer genetic mutations

DUNEDIN, New Zealand (AFP) — Researchers here say they have scored a world first by identifying the first genetic mutations proved to contribute to stomach cancer.

The discovery by Otago University's cancer genetics laboratory, to be reported in the latest edition of Nature, says stomach cancer is the second greatest cause of cancer-related death worldwide, and about 10 per cent of cases cluster in families. Associate Professor Mervyn Smith, the department head, said the finding was one of the most significant discoveries in medical science made in New Zealand during his 33-year career.

The research was conducted at the laboratory over a 26-month period, ending last Christmas when the genetic discovery was confirmed.

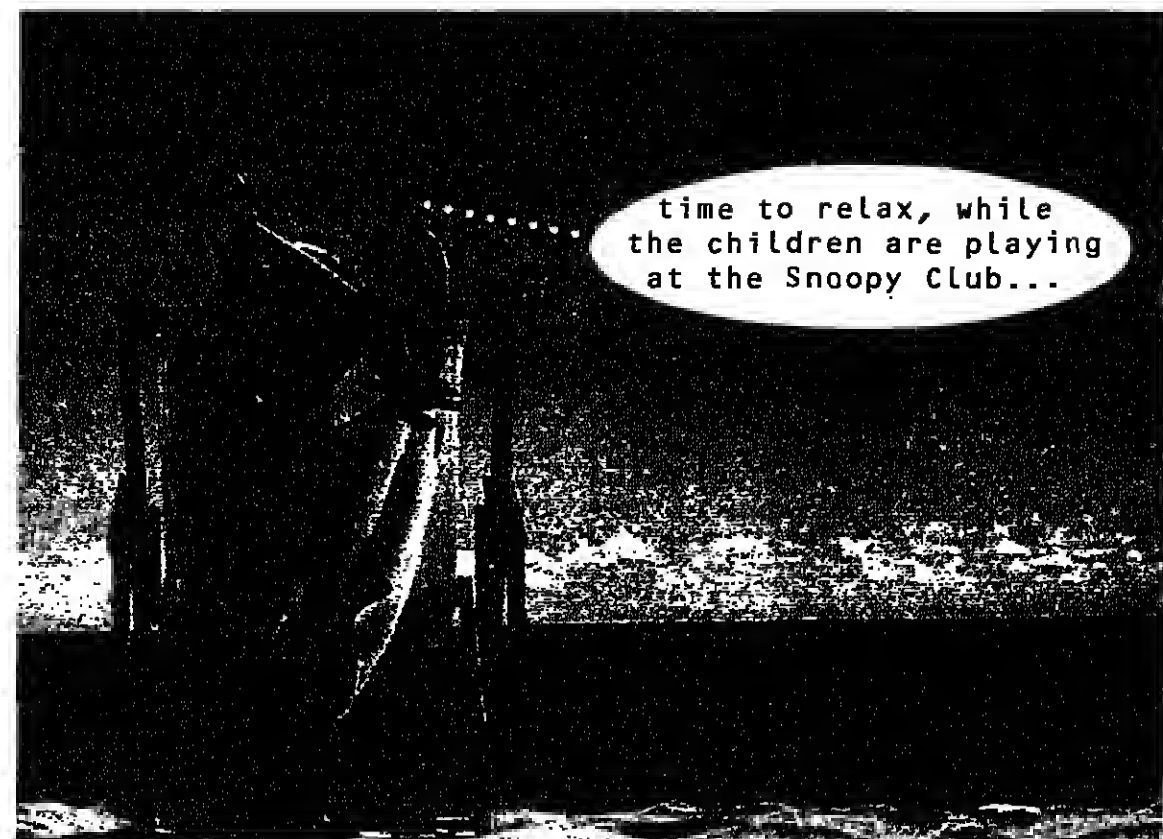
The researchers have identified genetic mutations in the E-cadherin gene in the 16th human chromosome, predisposing some people to develop stomach cancer. The mutations, which can be inherited, deactivate the gene which is important in cell adhesion and structure and is thought to suppress cancerous cell invasion.

Parry Guilford, the principal investigator for the Aotearoa (New Zealand) Gastric Cancer project, said the mutation could be common worldwide, particularly in the Pacific Islands and Asia.

"Identification of the gene enables the cancer to be detected early and greatly improves treatment options," he said. The project involved a unique research partnership between the university scientists and an indigenous Maori extended family in the Bay of Plenty, which is affected by a high rate of aggressive inherited gastric cancer.

Mr. Guilford said Otago researchers had already developed genetic blood tests which could in future be used to screen members of the three Maori families involved in the study.

This would allow earlier medical intervention where high genetic risks were detected. The research could also provide further valuable insights into other forms of cancer, he said.



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Old story told again

ISRAELI KNESSET Speaker Dan Tichon's attack yesterday on the U.N. over what he described as 50 years of "hostile" action against the Jewish state ironically served only to highlight his country's continued violations of international law and legitimacy.

Instead of being apologetic as may have been expected by Tichon and his colleagues, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan asserted that the U.N. does have a problem with the Jewish state. "It gives me no pleasure to recite a list of the grievances which the international community has against Israel," he told the Knesset members during his visit with them, which happened to be the first time a U.N. chief ever paid there. Clarifying that the U.N. is not a single party with a personal vendetta against Israel, Mr. Annan said that "the great majority of the member states of the United Nations regard Israel as having been responsible, directly or indirectly, for provocative acts that undermine goodwill and spark hostility."

This fact is evident in the numerous resolutions that the world body has passed on the Palestinian problem but were never implemented by Israeli governments.

Those resolutions started flowing since Nov. 29, 1947 when the U.N. approved the partition plan dividing Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, and they do not seem to be ending any time soon as the U.N.'s last resolution was taken on the 17th of this month criticising Israel's continued building and enlargement of illegal settlements and more may be on the way in light of the Netanyahu government's continued intransigence vis-a-vis the implementation of the Oslo and other peace accords with the Arabs.

What was far-fetched, if not totally ridiculous, during Mr. Annan's visit to Israel was Tichon's accusation that the U.N. "has become an obstacle in our relationship with our Arab neighbours."

Regarding this, the question of which came first, the chicken or the egg, does not apply. Not only are Arab states frustrated with Israel's hostile policies and actions in war and in peace, The Arab World has also been most dissatisfied with the fact that Israel has been able to turn its back on the international community's will, as manifested in U.N. resolutions, without punishment.

The Arab states, opting for peace, have gone far since the partition of Palestine in recognising Israel's right to exist and pushing for a political resolution to the Palestine question. The current Israeli leadership, on the other hand, represents the epitome of re-entrenchment behind Zionist expansionism and belligerency.

Tichon's twisting of the facts is in harmony with his prime minister's persistent attempts to physically change the facts on the ground.

What may work for Israel instead of pursuing the fight with the U.N. is to face reality by realising that the only way the Israelis are going to achieve international respect is when they comply with international will. In this day and age, the notion of occupying another nation is so outdated, it is internationally considered a phenomenon.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Rai's Ahmad Misleh addressed the visit of U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan to the Middle East which originally aimed at reviving the peace efforts but resulted in no breakthrough. The U.N. secretary general wanted to study the situation closely and hear the views of the Arab and Israeli parties involved in the stalled peace process, and that is exactly what he has done, said Misleh. Annan has made it clear that the U.N. is giving the U.S. the opportunity to continue its mediation efforts to find a formula that can guarantee a lasting peace and he did not venture into in-depth talks on a peace formula partly because Israel adamantly refuses this trend, and partly because he is clearly aware of the margin of manoeuvre allowed to him by the U.S.-dominated U.N. Security Council, according to the writer. But, Misleh said, if Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu refuses the American proposals for withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian lands, and rejects any intervention from the European Union and if Israel continues its objection to the implementation of the Oslo accords, has it not become necessary for the U.N. to step in and demand that Israel respect international legitimacy?

Al Dstour's Kamal Rashid criticised the Vatican for apologising to the Jews and the state of Israel for what it called its failure to undertake measures to save the Jews from the alleged Nazi persecution. The writer said the Holy See who has obviously taken this step under pressure from world Jewry has not regarded many famous world historians and politicians who cast doubt about the authenticity of reports that the Jews were persecuted by the Nazis. In order to prove that the Vatican took this step under pressure from the Zionists, Rashid said, the Holy See did not apologise to the Muslims and the Arab Christians for Israel's continued atrocities against them in Palestine neither did the Vatican come to the aid of the Muslims who were persecuted by the Serbs in the former Yugoslavia. He said the Pope did not apologise to the Vietnamese for the atrocities committed by the Americans. By apologising to the Jews, the Pope is committing the world's Catholics to follow suit, disregarding the sufferings of the Palestinian Muslims and Christians at the hands of the Jews in Palestine, he added. The writer said the Vatican is following a double standard policy in its dealings with various world situations.

View from Academia

On health, exercise and open space

By Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

AS PEOPLE become more health-conscious, they start not only to pay more attention to the quality (and quantity) of the food they eat, but they also resort to all types of exercise which help them burn calories and keep in shape.

I jog. Good? Well, yes and no. Yes because of what we have just said: you burn calories and you keep in shape. In addition, the minute you start jogging and inhaling fresh air (when there is not much traffic, that is), anxiety, frustration, and stress (and, for reasons that you are well-aware of, we accumulate a lot of these as the pace of the work day — or the non-work day, for that matter — picks up) all melt. For me, jogging is an excellent means of psyche cleansing. It has also — after overcoming the initial pain, suffering and torture — become a truly enjoyable experience. You almost get addicted to it, in addition to feeling that you actually accomplish something every time you run.

But no because of some fears and inconveniences. For one thing, there is the fear that the air you inhale is not so fresh. We have so much traffic (at all hours, essentially), and most of our road vehicles emit poisonous fumes in liberal or extra-liberal quantities. (There is also the possibility of being run over by a vehicle even while you are on the sidewalk).

For another, there is the fear of some damage to one's health in the long run. Does one wear the right shoes? Does one run on the right surface? I was talking to African-American poet/novelist Al Young (on a tour of

the region organised by USIS) the other day. Jogging cropped up in our conversation. He said (half-jokingly) that a couple of friends of his (doctors) are thriving on joggers in his hometown who injure their backs and knees or break bones. If jogging is not done right, it can be counterproductive. One is supposed to jog on earth/dirt, not asphalt or concrete sidewalks.

There is an added danger in our part of the world. Not only are our asphalt roads and concrete sidewalks hard, but they are full of holes or obstructions of sorts.

Well, how about running in open spaces that are scattered in or near the outskirts of the capital? There is not so much fume, and there is no asphalt or concrete. True. But there are not so many open spaces in the first place. And when there are, the surface is usually so rough, uneven, and full of rocks. And do not rule out (if I were you, I would not) the possibility of running into stray dogs (I am not joking!).

Many of the well-informed in the spheres of health, however, recommend walking or hiking. It is less demanding than jogging and equally beneficial (in addition to being less hazardous to backs and knees — so they say).

Fine, but (still) where do you walk — i.e. where there isn't pollution, rough surfaces or stray dogs, that is?

Come to think of it, we do not have much space in the capital and other major cities where you can walk — aside from our hazardous and tiny sidewalks, that is. How

many places can you name? Al-Hussein Youth City (and mini-versions of it in the other cities). Yes, but it is often so crowded, you can hardly exercise walking or jogging with ease. What about the various gardens built by the Greater Amman Municipality and other municipalities in Jordan? They are good for neither walking nor jogging; they are either too small or too steep.

The problem for women is, of course, more acute. Where can they walk or run, without fear of being harassed? Suppose they get sick of (or cannot afford) aerobic lessons or indoor exercises.

Some time ago, when many of us (male and female) lived in villages and did the things that villagers and farmers did (or when we lived in cities which had rural characteristics), we did not have much of a problem with either exercising or space. You walked, you played, you ran, and you worked on something which enabled you to get rid of the extra-calories (in addition to eating healthier food).

Today, we find ourselves in the midst of the hustle and bustle of urban life — with much less fresh air, much less fresh water, much less fresh food, much less space.

There is a need for larger breathing space, and (if we get lucky) some hiking and jogging tracks — before the mad, haphazard expansion of our towns and cities consume the space that is left and before we find ourselves choking and breathless, amidst smoke, fume, and mad cars.

Iran sanctions turn sticky for the United States

By Hanns-Jochen Kaffsack

WASHINGTON (DPA) — America's European allies have made a huge fuss and balked at the U.S. move to cut off foreign investment to Iran by passing legislation in 1996 aimed at punishing anyone who broke ranks and violated the sanctions against the regime in Tehran.

Now that the thaw in relations between Tehran and Washington has taken the edge off the animosity between the two former allies, the sanctions are becoming a hindrance to U.S. foreign policy.

The Clinton administration is anxious not to anger the Europeans and Russians, whose help they need against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and in Kosovo. The United States is also trying to avoid damaging its extremely tentative rapprochement with Iran — as it surely would if it imposed aggressive sanctions on foreign investors there.

However, from the point of view of the White House and the U.S. State Department the fact that oil companies from France, Russia and Malaysia are challenging the U.S. sanctions legislation with a large investment project in Iran comes at a decidedly delicate time.

Six months ago, the State Department began investigating the case because the three companies had agreed to investments totalling over \$2 billion in Iran's natural gas industry. Heated debates between advocates and opponents of the sanctions policy in the United States failed to bring clarity. The U.S. administration is pretty much paralysed.

"This is still a very tough one," a high-ranking U.S. official said. "There are a lot of competing interests. And the coherence of our Iran policy is at stake."

The fact that Clinton will reportedly not make any decision on whether to apply the sanctions until after his London summit with the European Union on May 18 makes clear the extent of U.S. indecision. Many observers believe Clinton would be happiest if the problem simply disappeared.

It seems that Undersecretary of State for Economic, Stuart Eizenstat, who led opposition to the sanctions, has prevailed. He has warned of the threat of a trade war with the Europeans — in the process invoking the wrath of the law's originator, Senator Alfonse D'Amato of New York.

Sen. D'Amato has written to Clinton to complain: "If the U.S. does not take swift, decisive action, we will have undercut our long-standing policy against Iranian terrorism. Dozens of foreign companies are watching out for reaction to the deal."

The law against foreign investment in Iran and Libya offers a whole range of possibilities to put the issue on ice or to waive any punishment. Punitive measures by the United States could be postponed twice for 90 days, as long as an amicable agreement is being negotiated.

The Europeans are hoping for a broad waiver so that no country or any company based there can be punished by U.S. sanctions aimed at hampering Tehran's arms policy. The very influential Senator D'Amato however is against any such compromise.

Many observers believe Clinton would be happiest if the problem simply disappeared.

Copenhagen Movement seeks U.N. support

The following is the text of a letter, made available to the Jordan Times, written to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan on March 23 from the signatories to the Copenhagen Declaration. The letter was signed by:

Ambassador Abdel Al Adawy (for the Egyptian chapter of the "International Alliance for Arab-Israeli Peace"), General (retd.) Ihsan Shurdom (for the Jordanian chapter), Professor Riad Malki (for the Palestinian chapter), and Mr. Shlomo Gal (for the Israeli chapter).

WE, A JORDANIAN, a Palestinian, an Egyptian and an Israeli, are honoured to hereby present to you a copy of the "Copenhagen Declaration," which is the platform of a unique non-governmental organisation (NGO). "The International Alliance for Arab-Israeli Peace." It is the only NGO in the Middle East embracing Egyptians, Jordanians, Palestinians and Israelis as members of a common platform, to promote

peace in our region. We feel certain that you, as secretary-general of the foremost organisation dedicated to peace, will give your blessing and support for this important NGO.

Under the slogan "peace is too important to be left only in the hands of governments," prominent Palestinians, Egyptians, Jordanians and Israelis convened in Copenhagen in January last year under the auspices of the foreign minister of Denmark and established the "Alliance" after adopting the "Copenhagen Declaration." This is the first time that such a group of people from the four nations came together and agreed upon principles for achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace between Israelis and Arabs. It is our conviction that peace between governments will remain fragile unless supported by people-to-people relationships: it is our belief that our governments must understand that our people, Arabs and Israelis alike, demand peace and are capable of working

together to achieve it, and will not allow the peace process to flounder.

We are dismayed at the present impasse in the peace process which is due mainly to non-respect and non-compliance with the Oslo and Hebron agreements. We deplore the procrastination, the foot-dragging and the lack of goodwill. In the words of the Copenhagen Declaration, "peace is too precious and war too abhorrent for us to sit idly by while deterioration takes place."

One of our forthcoming projects is to hold a preliminary emergency "Save the Peace" conference in Jerusalem in June with the participation of international personalities who wish to demonstrate their support for peace in the Middle East. We appeal to you to support in every way possible our endeavour, for peace must be victorious and more bloodshed and violence must be prevented. That is the goal of our Copenhagen Movement, and we hope and trust that all peace-loving people in the world will give us their support.

LETTERS

Amazing!

To the editor:

I AM an American citizen, born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. My wife and I came to Jordan recently to visit one of my daughters who is happily married to a Jordanian, and who has lived in Amman with her husband and children for the past 13 years. I admit that, before my visit, my knowledge of Amman was limited, but I had many negative impressions and expectations which I developed from the media and from associating Jordan with some of its neighbouring countries. I am glad to say that my visit to Jordan has converted me into an ardent admirer of your country and your people.

The tourist brochures which my daughter sent us in advance, prepared us for Jordan "the cradle of civilisation, and indeed, we marvelled at the remains of ancient cultures that adorn your land and your museums. But nothing prepared us for the progress and modernity that your country has achieved, despite its small size and limited population."

We found hundreds of government schools and over thirty mission schools, in addition to twenty or so universities, and I learnt that hundreds of Jordanian teachers travel every year to neighbouring countries to teach in their schools. Your houses are built of concrete and sandstone, and every house enjoys electricity and running water, to say nothing of refrigerators and colour and satellite television. Jordanian hospitals are full of doctors trained in the best institutes of the West, who have performed some of the most intricate surgery, and some of your hospitals are affiliated with the best clinics in the United States, like Mayo, Houston, and Cleveland. There are chains of all famous hotels, some already there and others being built, as well as specialty restaurants and all the food chains to which we in the United States are accustomed.

We were equally amazed to find your shops stocked with the latest fashions and American and European brand names, and to see the provisions available for entertainment. The sports cities in Amman and Irbid are similar to, and better than some that we have in States, and we found Jordanians playing tennis, basketball, horseback riding, soccer, and martial arts. There are over twenty cinemas showing the latest films from America, and theatres which, unfortunately, we could not enjoy because of the language barrier, but we were able to enjoy a concert of classical music performed by students from your National Music Conservatory. We were amazed to find more than ten bridge clubs, in addition to branches of the Rotary Club, the Skol Club, and the Lions Club. All of this stands comparison with many communities in the United States that have twice the size and population of Jordan.

However, what I found most remarkable and admirable is the spirit of your people. Jordanians are a hard working, honest, hospitable, and family-loving people. Your churches and mosques stand side by side and are equally respected by all members of the community. The streets of your towns and cities are clean and safe, and young and old people enjoy freedom of behaviour, expression, worship, and dress. Everyone with whom we met was extremely polite and helpful whenever we needed help.

We have returned to our home in Philadelphia full of happiness and admiration for your country and your people. I write this letter to you in the hope that you may publish it, so that the truth about Jordan, as I have seen it, may reach as many people as possible.

Joseph Coleman,
Doylestown, Pennsylvania
U.S.A.

The 'saga' of a sacking

To the editor:

TO MY American mind, the whole saga of Ms. Dabbas's sacking ("Fulbright employee threatens legal action over dismissal for political activities," Jordan Times, March 22) conjures up (yet again) unsavoury images of latent Western hypocrisy. For how else can I interpret the unfolding events? To follow the shallow logic deployed against Ms. Dabbas, all American civil rights activists should lose their jobs because of their strong political views. Needless to say, our incumbent President himself was a Fulbright student at Oxford University who disagreed with the then U.S. foreign policy and military conscription, should now be jobless, instead of running the world's strongest nation!

What I have found incredibly irritating was an American pontificating Jordanian citizens to talk in a docile manner to officials with important connections. Again to my American Western mind, officials should be respected for their inherent worthiness

and public contributions, not because of their connections. Indeed, the content of the official letter directed against Ms. Dabbas was patronising and conspicuously (and exaggeratingly) prejudiced.

The irony really is that despite formidable societal constraints, few Jordanian women have occasionally proved to be more outspoken than countless (but useless) contingents of their male counterparts. A paternalistic (and often highly parochial) society would be far better off if brave women like Ms. Aida Dabbas and Ms. Toujan Feisal and many others were not so shamelessly suppressed. Though, my own empirical research on gender issues in the Arab World demonstrates that all high spirited Arab women still have a long way before reaching satisfactory levels of emancipation. For their courage, determination and outspokenness, I certainly take off my hat.

Alice F. Anderson (Dr.)
Boston, Massachusetts
U.S.A.

Silence in the name of justice

To the Editor:

BIS MIL lah el rahman el raheem

THANK YOU Dr. Clare Brandabur for speaking out in the name of justice and freedom of speech. As a Palestinian-American Muslim (al hamdu lillah), I have been discriminated against since early childhood by all Americans, and even in Jordan by my own people. I had no control over things that happened to me, but on March 25, I received another

premonition of what it was all about. I guess you could say I broke some balls. God has been protecting me all my life. As Prophet Mohammad (sal allah wa ah lay he wa se llam) once said (and as was quoted by the late Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.): "Any man who remains silent in the name of justice... then that man becomes a part of that injustice."

Lah howla wella koo it tih bil lah

Ann Holloway
Shmeisani

EU set for 11-member single currency

BRUSSELS (AFP) — The European Commission on Wednesday issued a green light for 11 countries to switch to a single currency next year in the biggest ever single step towards deeper integration in Europe.

Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain have all met the key qualifying conditions on inflation, public debt and budget deficit levels to adopt the euro, the EU's executive arm said in a 200-page report.

The recommendation clears the way for the creation of a single currency zone of 290 million people that will rival the United States in terms of economic power.

The commission's list has to be endorsed by European Union leaders at a special summit here on May 2 but this is seen as a mere formality.

France and Germany, whose post-war reconciliation has been the driving force behind European integration, hailed Wednesday's report as an historic turning point.

"Today is an important day for Europe," said German Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac declared: "This is the beginning of a new era."

Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi said he would have resigned if the country had failed to be part of such a decisive step forward for Europe.

Wednesday's list was published 41 years to the day after the signing of the Treaty of Rome gave birth to the European Community.

In contrast with the commission's upbeat assessment of the degree of convergence, the European Monetary Institute, the forerunner of the European Central Bank that will run the euro, warned that France and Germany had "considerable" work to do to consolidate their public finances.

The EMI also expressed reservations about the high level of public debt in Belgium and Italy. Both countries have debt levels above 120 per cent of their GDP. Under the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, countries are supposed to be under 60 per cent or making progress towards this objective.

Wim Duisenberg, the head of the EMI and the favourite to be the first head of the European Central Bank, warned that accounting tricks used by countries this year to ensure they qualified would have to be replaced with structural reform.

"The temporary measures adopted by a certain number of countries must be replaced by sustainable reforms," he said.

Of the 15 EU countries only Greece and Sweden failed to qualify, the commission said. The recommendations did not cover Britain and Denmark, which have exercised the opt-outs they negotiated in

(Continued on page 9)

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, MARCH 27, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You can't stand it when people beat around the bush. Today, all you'll have to do is ask! If you seem to be getting contradictory answers, don't back off. Just point that out and keep after it until you get the whole story. This could be very entertaining.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Your boss or an older person is in a generous mood. Watch out for one who wants to pay you with advice instead of cash, though. Don't take any IOUs. Meanwhile, value your sweetheart's advice highly. He or she can see something you're missing.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Ask a Libra friend out to dinner. If you don't have a one, just ask the most attractive person you know. The combination with your sign and Libra is very complimentary. With your hyperactivity, you can both burn off those extra calories. Get out there and play!

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Information from a private source might not be right. The person who's passing along the gossip got it from somebody else, and you know how those things go. You're pretty good at dishing innuendoes yourself. So don't pass along any information you're not certain about. And don't pay much attention to anything you hear, either.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) If you don't have a marvellous time today, it's your own fault. Everyone you know will be enjoying themselves. It's an excellent day for group activities and meetings. Keep people focused on the subject at hand. Even big changes will be easy with the conditions that are in effect right now.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You'll have to stay on your toes to keep ahead of the action today. Instead of getting frustrated, offer some guidance. You can figure out what the objective is, and the best route to get there. In other words, you're the navigator. Don't just sit there and be a passenger in life today.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You may have to go farther than you expected to get what you want. If it's not available in the local stores, try checking the catalogues. Actually, it may not even have been invented yet. Not to worry. Things are changing so fast that it'll probably be here soon.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) If you don't have any investments, it's time you got some. Things are changing all around you. That's all the more reason to think about your security. Focus on long-term goals today. Otherwise, you're liable to spend everything you've got on something you want now. Resist the temptation.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You're in for a very interesting day. Your competition has the advantage. Instead of getting into a fight you can't win, go into the situation with hat in hand. If you take this stance in a confrontational situation, you'll learn something valuable and make a good impression on the other person.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Somebody's trying to talk your ear off. He or she wants to sell you something. There's only one thing to keep in mind. If this item is going to bring you more money, it's good. If it's going to cost you more money, it's bad. Make that clear and you'll shorten the conversation considerably.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You're attractive to a person whom you find attractive. The two of you might be able to get together for lunch or dinner. The conversation you get into could have interesting side effects. Something that starts out as a friendship could easily develop into more.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) There is change in the air. You're lucky, forceful and dynamic. You're also good-looking. So what have you got to worry about? Absolutely nothing! Make your life into what you've always wanted it to be. Toss out whatever doesn't work and get on to whatever does. You know which is which.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) The thing you and your friends want to do turns out to be too expensive. Don't give up your dream, but do find another source of income. It's likely you'll come up with a creative idea tonight. An older person, somebody you don't always agree with, is most likely to think of it. Accept suggestion from everybody.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) An offer you accept first thing this morning can work out well. Later in the day, it will be hard to get agreement on anything. That'll be true with your friends, your boss even your spouse. Hang on a little longer. More money should become available tomorrow. After that, you'll notice things loosening up.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Your sweetheart makes a demand this morning that will hardly thrill you. It's one of those "If you loved me, you'd..." kind of things. In this case, it wouldn't be such a bad idea to comply. It won't cost you that much, and it means quite a bit to the other person.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) A loved one will give you excellent advice today. It's important to listen and learn. You don't need to do what he or she says. Just accept the coaching and make the decision. Well, that's the idea, anyway. Actually, you might be able to get away with letting the other person make a couple of the decisions, too.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Somebody at home is an anchor around your neck today. He or she won't go along with your ideas, perhaps for good reason. That makes it even more infuriating, since you and a partner are convinced you're right. Instead of being upset, listen. Your antagonist may see something you're avoiding.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) The pace is picking up, and by tomorrow it's full speed ahead. Right now you have some time to practise and ponder. Everybody thinks you know everything, and that's fine with you. The truth is that you have to study just like everybody else, and this is the day to do it. Don't fall into the trap of simply reading comic books.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) If you do a little research, you might find a good deal on something about buying real estate? If so, you need to do the homework first. You do the homework and you have a better chance of getting the home.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You're strong, energetic and exceptionally good-looking. You'll need every bit of that extra energy to get what you want. To outwit a stubborn roommate, encourage his or her outrageous side. This person will get so crazy, you'll have free reign. You'll be the only sane one left.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Some people can be so stubborn. Your problem is that you try to please everybody. Today, that's going to be really difficult. You're not just please the one who signs your paycheques and worry about the other one later?

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Schedule a breakfast date as early as possible. During the middle of the day, there will be conflict, and that's not a good time to go shopping. Well, you can if you're careful about your spending. If you go shopping with a person who's tighter with money than you are.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You're in a strong position. If you're in a conflict with a Scorpio, however, be careful. Scorpios like to be in control at all times, or they tend to get a little nasty. Show your mastery by letting this person have what he or she wants. Only if it's legal and within reason, of course.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) There might be a battle raging out there. It could involve a friend who lives far away, who's upset at being unable to do everything he or she wants. You can counsel your friend to lighten up a little bit, and that's a good idea. Do what you can to help.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OFFER PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
346.00	250.00	ARAB BANK	13.9	1.17	36	1320	449,830	338.50	341.00	2.50+
2,340	1,660	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8.0	0.00	35	32,350	54,518	1.67	1.69	0.02+
2,340	1,300	BANK OF JORDAN	25.9	0.00	1	200	250	1.30	1.25	0.05-
2,680	1,660	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.3	6.07	6	41145	70,770	1.72	1.72	0.00
5,300	4,660	THE HOUSING BK.	29.9	1.94	8	10,800	53,942	4.93	5.00	0.07+
1,950	1,300	JOR. GULF BANK	3.8	11.11	4	5,250	1,308	0.64	0.63	0.01-
4,020	1,960	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	10.0	4.87	6	1,995	3,934	1.98	1.97	0.01-
1,400	800	BEIT AL-HAL (BEITHA)	5	17.24	3	1,100	962	0.88	0.87	0.01-
BANK SECTOR TOTALS										
			INDEX: 236.00	CHNG: +0.71	99	94160	6375.13			
2,400	1,590	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.5	12.76	4	2050	4009	1.98	1.96	0.02-
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS										
			INDEX: 121.61	CHNG: -0.10	4	2050	4009			
2,140	1,550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	10.0	4.81	13	4720	9801	2.05	2.08	0.02+
1,550	930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	42.7	0.00	51	23308	23374	1.05	1.07	0.01+
1,590	370	JORDAN INV. TRAD.	20.5	0.00	19	8600	3496	1.40	1.40	0.00
9,500	6,700	ARAB 1	9.6	6.38	3	400	3,725	9.50	9.40	0.10-
1,480	1,130	MID. EAST HOTELS	17.2	0.00	9	78200	88758	1.14	1.13	0.01-
4,600	2,890	ARAB FZIL INV. EDUC.	10.7	1.86	8	140000	61883	4.29	4.30	0.01+
1,090	900	CARVED EDUCATION	6.9	7.10	11	50500	7828	1.55	1.55	0.00
1,830	1,550	UNIFIED CO.	9	0.00	1	750	495	0.66	0.66	0.00
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS										
			INDEX: 119.49	CHNG: +0.11	116	462207	96926			
4,450	2,900	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	18.6	3.97	11	10062	27882	2.76	2.77	0.01+
11,160	9,200	JOR. PETRO. REFINERY	10.3	8.39	8	863	9,147	10.62	10.60	0.02-
6,700	4,500	JORDAN TANNING	8.8	7.27	6	1325	7288	5.50	5.50	0.00
2,440	1,100	INDUSTRIAL COMM. AGR.	10.2	0.00	4	1350	1715	1.21	1.27	0.06+
7,250	5,800	JOR. WOODSTED HILLS	10.2	3.16	1	200	1,264	6.32	6.32	0.00
5,700	3,440	ARAB PHARM. MATE.	14.0	3.94	51	28125	142362	5.33	5.08	0.05-
7,200	2,100	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	14.3	4.76	1	3000	6300	2.10	2.10	0.00
1,530	1,020	JOR. FILMS MANUF.	14.0	0.00	2	3750	3085	1.20	1.23	0.03+
3,010	2,540	JOR. PAPER CARBON	14.0	0.00	2	378	813	2.54	2.48	0.06-
6,350	4,400	AR. ALDAMA. DR. INV.	15.1	4.07	2	1050	6458	6.15	6.15	0.00
3,460	2,230	ARAB ALUM. IND.	6.7	8.77	5	2250	7376	2.80	2.85	0.05+
580	400	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	10.2	0.00	1	1000	482	0.49	0.48	0.01-
1,100	820	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	9	0.00	4	1000	615	0.62	0.61	0.01-
1,430	930	NATL. CABLE WIRE. NFAC	28.2	0.00	7	2150	2459	1.14	1.17	0.03+
890	370	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	11	13300	5463	0.42	0.41	0.01-
3,000	920	NATL. CABLE WIRE. NFAC	28.2	0.00	7	2150	2459	1.14	1.17	0.03+
790	530	JOR. SULPHUR CHEM.	17.0	0.00	8	7000	4130	0.60	0.59	0.01-
1,560	1,150	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	17.0	0.00	13	5120	550	1.25	1.23	0.02-
1,670	810	UNIV. MOON. INDUS.	16.1	5.94	22	10940	11311	1.02	1.01	0.01-
1,280	890	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	10.4	12.99	1	250	193	0.77	0.77	0.00
1,080	810	ARAB JEW. CABLE CO.	18.2	0.00	64	124100	12754	1.22	1.23	0.01+
1,250	1,080	INTL. TOBACCO	6.5	0.00	3	12750	14703	1.18	1.18	0.00
1,220	860	JORDAN CH. & VEG.	49.4	0.00	5	14500	14645	1.03	1.03	0.00
850	560	JORDAN CH. & VEG.	37.1	6.10	38	13512	6261	0.81	0.82	0.01+
820	570	MID. EAST COMPLEX	7.9	15.63	13	16500	10358	0.63	0.64	0.01+
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS										
			INDEX: 110.08	CHNG: +0.10	275	442005	63265			
GRAND TOTAL										
			INDEX: 168.09	CHNG: +0.46	494	1,000,522	221,449			

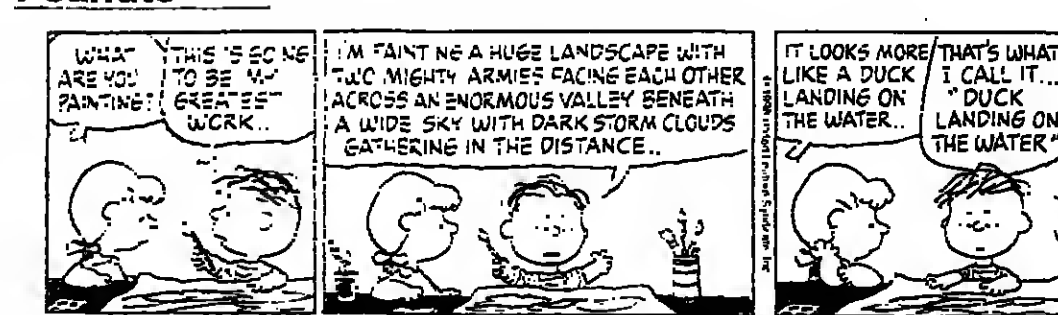
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 25/03/1998

NO.	PRICE	COMPANY'S NAME	P/E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
1,050	910	EXPORT & FIN. BKR. 75%	17.2	0.00	6	3,750	16,589	0.32	0.33	0.01+
530	340	JOR. TRADE FAC.	9	0.00	10	30,950	13,670	0.39	0.39	0.00
800	660	UNION INV. 50%	9	0.00	15	69,400	16,656	0.74	0.74	0.00
620	360	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	32	123,142	59,811	0.48	0.48	0.00
1,000	750	AL-SHARQ INV. CO.	9	0.00	2	1,200	2,000	0.97	0.97	0.00
36,000	1,050	JOR. TOURIST TRANS. CO.	3.7	2.61	1	500	525	1.10	1.05	0.05-
780	610	AL-DAMLIYAH 75%	66.2	0.00	13	20,532	8,858	0.58	0.59	0.01+
1,000	800	ARAB JEW. CABLE CO.	18.2	0.00	64	124,100	12,754	1.22	1.21	0.01-
290	120	JOR. INDUS. MATCH-JEKCO	9	0.00	2	20,000	2,800	0.13	0.14	0.01+
470	240	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	42.8	0.00	27	116,000	44,080	0.38	0.38	0.00
530	280	NATL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	3	5,000	1,865	0.34	0.33	0.01-
750	360	NATL. ENG. HAMICO	9	0.00	38	87,600	34,164	0.39	0.39	0.00
1,230	890	READY MIX CONCRETE	13.3	0.00	2	450	495	1.05	1.10	0.05+
600	310	HAYZAK OILS & NOILES	9	0.00	1	5100	35	0.36	0.36	0.00
520	400	ARAB ELECT. INDUS.	9	0.00	2	2,100	860	0.41	0.40	0.01-
1,500	960	HIGHEST PHARM. 90%	9	0.00	3	600	318	0.54	0.63	0.01+
1,500	960	UNION TOBACCO 75%	9	0.00	3	600	318	0.54	0.63	0.01+
730	550	RAZI PHARM.	9	0.00	2	2,000	1,420	0.71	0.71	0.00
1,400	920	INDOS. ENG.	13.9	0.00	12	12,350	3,592	0.29	0.29	0.00
830	510	INDOS. CERAMIC	13.9	0.00	12	6,000	3,103	0.51	0.53	0.02+
950	550	ADVANCED PHARM. IND.	9	0.00	11	12,100	7,144	0.64	0.64	0.00
740	480	NATL. POULTRY	9	0.00	28	38,800	15,203	0.46	0.46	0.00

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

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Peanuts



First Division Basketball Championship

Jeel face Jalil in crucial encounter tonight

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — While Thursday's Jazireh-Hussein match in Irbid does not promise any competitive action, the other first division match following it at Al Hassan Sports City is crucial for both teams.

Al Jalil are in desperate need of a win when they face Al Jeel to whom they lost by one point 61-60 in the first round.

Although they beat Al Hussein 47-35, Al Jalil now find themselves out of their usual fourth place which they have conceded to newcomers Al Jeel.

The former second division team has defied expectations as they also beat Al Hussein in the first round and need only one more win to secure their place in the six-team group.

Al Jalil and Al Hussein therefore find themselves in the unenviable position of having to play to avoid the relegation-threatened last place.

In the other match, titleholders Al Jazireh who ended the first round with an unbeaten streak seem unlikely to have any problems in securing another win.

They beat Al Hussein 89-43 in the first round match and scored the biggest result of the tournament when they beat Al Jeel 130-50 in their latest match.

Throughout the preliminary round, Al Jazireh displayed a fast attacking style in knocking out opponents including former champs Al Orthodoxi 92-84, although they had a hard time man-



Titleholders Al Jazireh

aging a 75-69 win over Al Ahli.

Al Ahli, who came in second last year, have the day off together with Al Orthodoxi before they meet Saturday. Regardless of their results in the two rounds, the top three teams — Jazireh, Ahli and Orthodoxi — will have a shot at the title with introduction of the playoff system this year.

In their latest matches, Al Ahli beat Hussein 61-43 and Al Orthodoxi beat Al Jalil 93-43.

Al Ahli have been tackling technical and managerial obstacles for the past two seasons — a fact that delayed their pre-season training. They were also looking for a coach while working on the return of their veterans Youssef Zaghoul and Marwan Ma'touq to the team after

missing last season.

Al Jazireh's win last year ended a 30-year domination by rivals Orthodoxi and Al Ahli.

Al Orthodoxi had an undisputed reign from 1976-1989, but Al Ahli won the title in 1990, 1992, 1993 and 1994 aided by the signing of Bushnaq.

Al Orthodoxi came back to win in 1991, 1995 and 1996.

STANDINGS

Team	P	W	L	Sf	Sa	Pts
Jazireh	6	6	1	559	359	12
Orthodoxi	6	5	1	529	356	11
Ahli	6	4	2	412	363	10
Jeel	6	2	4	354	528	8
Jalil	6	1	5	303	439	7
Hussein	6	-	6	304	436	6

McRae throws down gauntlet in Portugal

MATOSINHOS, Portugal (AFP) — Colin McRae dispelled doubts he may be having engine problems in his Subaru Impreza to throw down the gauntlet to his challengers through Wednesday's first four specials on the final day of the Rally of Portugal.

McRae was behind Spain's Carlos Sainz, in his works Toyota Corolla, on the day's first timed section but then set the scratch times on the next two specials.

Belgium's Freddy Loix, who had launched a threatening attack late Tuesday in

his privately-entered Toyota Corolla, posted the fastest time on the next special.

But the Scot was less than two seconds slower and overall he led Loix by 16sec and Sainz by 30sec.

Safari Rally winner Richard Burns of Britain was 44sec off the pace in fourth place in his Mitsubishi Carisma.

McRae had another four specials to defend his lead for his first win of the season, and 14th of his career. Mechanical problems have let him down in two of the first three rounds of the championship.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Thais rebel over order to shave

BANGKOK (AFP) — Six Thai soccer stars have deliberately missed matches and training after being told to shave their heads by the national coach. The players missed a friendly international against Kazakhstan, but a Thai football association official said Wednesday the dispute was "a misunderstanding." "The coach asked them to voluntarily shave their heads to forge team unity. But he did not force them to shave," said the official. Thailand still won the match 1-0 against Kazakhstan, who they play again Thursday. There had been conflicting reports as to why the footballers went missing. Some said they might have been offered terms to move to Singapore. The Thai football team is currently preparing for the Asian Games in Bangkok in December.

Karros to miss start of season

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Los Angeles first baseman Eric Karros, who last season was the lone Dodger to play in all 162 games, will undergo surgery on his left knee Tuesday and be out three-to-six weeks. Hobbled all spring by the ailing knee, Karros elected to undergo a diagnostic arthroscopy at Cedars Hospital in Los Angeles. The decision was made Monday after a visual inspection of the knee was performed by doctor Ralph Gambardella, who suspected cartilage damage. Team physician Frank Jobe said Karros has had persistent knee pain and the joint has not responded well to treatment. Karros' operation comes exactly one week before the start of the Major League Baseball season on March 31.

Edmundo ordered to pay \$200,000

RIO DE JANEIRO (AFP) — Brazilian star striker Edmundo was ordered to pay the mother of a car crash victim \$200,000 and an unspecified monthly pension on Tuesday. The court found Edmundo responsible for the 1995 car crash which killed his woman passenger Joana Martins Couto Iliane. The three-car accident, which caused three deaths altogether, occurred after Edmundo left a night club. Edmundo, who walked out on his Italian club Fiorentina without playing for them, has not ruled out his hopes of making Brazil's final squad for the World Cup in France in June-July.

Lineker backs Sheringham ahead of Owen

LONDON (AFP) — Former England goalscorer hero Gary Lineker admits that teenage sensation Michael Owen is a better player than he ever was — but he still believes Teddy Sheringham should remain as Alan Shearer's strike partner for the World Cup.

Lineker, who scored 48 goals in 80 games for England, has huge respect for the 18-year-old Liverpool ace's ability. But he believes his best role in France would be as a substitute for Manchester United's Sheringham, ready to use his phenomenal pace to exploit tiring defenders' lack of speed towards the end of matches.

"At the moment, I think the favourite partnership would be Shearer and Sheringham, but it's nice to have Owen in reserve," said Lineker, who also insisted that Paul Gascoigne had to be picked if he was fit.

"Owen and I are worlds apart. I was slow and a late developer and he is infinitely more talented than I was at that stage — or was at my peak, probably. But I would probably score more goals in the long-run."

"At the moment, you would say that Michael looks to be the sort of player that would come on for the last 20 minutes with his incredible pace and feet and make things happen."

"Shearer and Sheringham give us a nice balance, they are a proven partnership. Teddy always gives you a bit of depth, which is good from one of your strikers."

"Michael Owen gives you different strengths as he won't drop deep like Sheringham does but he gives you greater width and get crosses in that Shearer could take advantage of."

"It's a nice choice for coach Glenn Hoddle to have and I think he has publicly stated that he was a little bit worried about Sheringham's physical capacity to endure a lot of games in the World Cup, he felt he struggled a bit in Euro 96."

Lineker added: "I wouldn't say that anyone is guaranteed a place in the squad."

"I know what Glenn is saying about Michael Owen not being a natural goal-scorer because he does other things as well. But he's certainly going to score a few goals."

"Looking at it from afar, it would seem that Glenn is intimating that Michael isn't a Gerd Muller poacher-type, that sort of player, even like Robbie Fowler that makes runs into the near post and scores goals like that."

"He's probably saying there's a bit more to him in that he gets wide and gets crosses in."

"I think Glenn's right to find out about Michael Owen now and he looks an awesome talent, there's no question about that. His age shouldn't count against him and he doesn't have the fear that some older players might have."

As for Gascoigne, he added: "There's no debate. If he's fit, he goes and if he isn't fit, then he doesn't and I'm sure Glenn feels the same. "I think he's a fundamental part of the team and realistically if we are going to challenge for the World Cup, we need Gazza fit and on top of his game."

Karlsruhe sack Schaefer

COLOGNE (AFP) — Karlsruhe have sacked coach Winfried Schaefer after almost 12 years in the job.

The new man at the helm will be Jorg Berger, well-known in Bundesliga circles as a "fireman" who comes to a troubled club at the 11th hour to save it from relegation.

Karlsruhe fit the bill. Despite playing in Europe earlier this season in the UEFA Cup they are now third from bottom and seriously in danger of getting the chop to Germany's second division. The 48-year-old Schaefer, considered an institution in Karlsruhe, will receive a golden handshake of an estimated 1.2 million marks.

He joined Karlsruhe in 1986 and made a name for the small provincial team with

three appearances in the UEFA Cup and the purchase of German star Thomas Haestler from Italy.

Berger will take over on Thursday and lead the team into their tough match this weekend against Bayern Munich. In the years he spent at Eintracht Frankfurt (1988-1991), Cologne (1991-1993) and Schalke (1993-1996) he pulled all three clubs out of the fire, only to be replaced later on by bigger name coaches.

His last position was at Swiss side Basel who replaced him in October.

"Berger is the right man for the job," goalkeeper Claus Reitmaier said. "He has led a lot of teams out of trouble and he will manage it with us too."



Houston Rockets forward Kevin Willis pulls a defensive rebound away from Milwaukee Bucks guard Ray Allen in the first quarter at the Bradley Center in Milwaukee. Rockets center Hakeem Olajuwon is sandwiched in the middle. The Bucks won 118-108 (Reuters photo)

SCOREBOARD

NBA			
Charlotte	106	Toronto	89
Atlanta	85	Orlando	73
San Antonio	86	Cleveland	85
Utah	92	Phoenix	73
Milwaukee	118	Houston	108
Washington	99	Portland	87
New York	88	Golden State	75

NHL			
New Jersey	3	Philadelphia	2
Buffalo	2	Calgary	0
Phoenix	4	Toronto	2
Vancouver	4	NY Islanders	3
Los Angeles	4	San Jose	3

Casablanca ATP Tour

Hicham Arazi (Mor x2) bt Hernan Gony (Arg) 6-3, 6-6, 6-1

Karim Alami (Mor x3) bt Marcelo Craca (Ger) 6-3, 6-2

Albert Porras (Spa x1) bt Gilbert Schaller (Aut) 6-4, 6-1

Atilla Savolt (Hun) bt Rainer Schuttler (Ger) 6-3, 6-2

Alex Calabrava (Spa) bt Franco Squillari (Arg) 6-3, 6-3

Christian Ruud (Nor) bt Marzio Martelli (Ita) 6-4, 6-4

Fernando Vicente (Spa) bt John Van Lottum (Ned) 1-6, 6-3, 6-0

Sjeng Schalken (Ned x5) bt Alex Lopez-Moron (Spa) 6-2, 7-5

Juan-Antonio Marin (Spa x6) bt Renzo Furlan (Ita) 4-6, 6-4, 6-0

Charles Auffray (Fra) bt Jens Knippschild (Ger) 3-6, 6-3, 6-0

Arnaud Di Pasquale (Fra) bt Arnaud Boetsch (Fra) 6-3, 4-6, 6-3

Andria Gaudenzi (Ita x4) bt Andrei Pavel (Rom) 6-7 (6/8), 7-5, 6-3

Jordi Burillo (Spa x7) bt Alberto Martin (Spa) 6-2, 6-4

Sebastian Grosjean (Fra) bt Martin Sinner (Ger) 7-6 (6/4), 6-3

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TAMMAM HIRSH
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WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - As South, vulnerable, you hold: ♠ A 5 7 ♥ A K J 2 ♦ A K J 2 ♣ A K J 2 The bidding has proceeded: SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST 1 1 1 1 What action do you take?	Q. 4 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold: ♠ A K 9 ♥ Q 9 5 ♦ A Q 10 8 ♣ A 7 4 3 Partner opens the bidding with three clubs. What do you bid now?
Q. 2 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold: ♠ A 8 6 ♥ Q J ♦ A J 10 5 3 ♣ A J 10 6 The bidding has proceeded: SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST 1 1 1 1 What action do you take?	Q. 5 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold: ♠ A K 5 ♥ K 10 8 ♦ A 7 3 ♣ A 10 6 2 Your right-hand opponent opens the bidding with three diamonds. What action do you take?
Q. 3 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold: ♠ A Q 10 5 3 ♥ Q J 7 ♦ A K J 7 ♣ A 8 Partner opens the bidding with one spade. What do you respond?	Q. 6 - As South, vulnerable, you hold: ♠ A 3 ♥ A Q 8 6 ♦ A K Q 5 ♣ A Q 6 The bidding has proceeded: SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST 1 1 1 1 What do you bid now?

PHILADELPHIA '1'

Leonardo Di Caprio ... in

ROMEO & JULIET

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15,
8:30, 10:30

PHILADELPHIA '2'

Val Kilmer & Elizabeth Shue... in

THE SAINT

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15,
8:30, 10:30

PLAZA

The biggest cinema production

TITANIC

Shows: 12:00, 3:00, 7:00,
10:30 p.m.

CONCORD

Kim Basinger ... in

L.A. CONFIDENTIAL

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:45

Adel Imam & Yusra ... in

RISALA ILA AL WALI

Shows: 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30

GALLERIA 2

ABDOUN

GRAND OPENING

TITANIC

Shows: 5:15, 8:30

The film is also on at 2:00 p.m. & 12:00 a.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays

GALLERIA 1

ABDOUN

GRAND OPENING

TITANIC

Shows: 3:30, 7:00, 10:30

The film is also on at 12:00 a.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays

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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Riyadh opens door for Jordanian workers to return to Saudi market

ACCORDING TO government sources, the Saudi authorities have started to allow the return of Jordanian workers to Saudi Arabia following the improvement of relations between the two countries. The sources described the Saudi lifting of restrictions on issuing visas to Jordanian labour as an extremely positive step. They indicated that the return of Jordanian workers will be according to the needs and requirements of the Saudi market which is considered one of the largest markets in the Gulf countries.

The Jordanian government has exerted major efforts with the various Arab Gulf states over the past months to open the way for employing Jordanians in various specialties. These efforts were successful in increasing the number of Jordanian workers in some of the Gulf countries such as Oman, Bahrain and Yemen in addition to Qatar which absorbed thousands of Jordanians over the past period.

Despite not having fresh statistics about the number of Jordanians who work in Arab countries, latest available data show that around 200,000 Jordanians work in various sectors in Arab countries, including the Gulf states. The highest percentage of Jordanians working abroad had to leave their jobs during 1990 as a result of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait which is still refusing to allow Jordanians to return to work in the emirate (Al Aswaq).

Cabinet approves JD502 million budgets for 26 independent public institutions

THE CABINET has approved the 1998 budgets of 26 independent public institutions which include for the first time the Radio and Television Corporation and the Jordanian Cooperative Corporation. The budgets total JD502 million of which capital expenditure amounts to JD259 million. Most of the capital spending goes for the Water Authority which had a JD127 million.

The budgets of the 26 institutions envisage JD249 million in recurrent earnings, JD126 million in capital earnings, JD44 million in government assistance and another JD44 million as government contribution in the projects. Aid and grants were estimated at JD37 million (Al Dastour).

Council of Ministers authorises disbursement of JD23m to municipalities

THE CABINET has decided to extend JD23 million to all municipalities to support their budgets and enable them to implement service projects for the citizens. Municipal and Rural Affairs Minister Tawfiq Kreishan has said. The amounts will be disbursed from the fund where "fuel fees" are deposited, the minister added.

Mr. Kreishan said the money will be disbursed from the beginning of next month at the latest. The Municipality of Greater Amman will get 20 per cent of the total amount. (Al Ra'i).

USAID launches \$13.4m programme to improve Jordan's business climate

By Ghaila Alul
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Wednesday launched a \$13.4 million programme aimed at "transforming the country's business environment, stimulating greater investments and increasing economic growth through sustainable micro-finance initiatives."

As Jordan edges closer to integrating into the global economy, the four-year "Access to Microfinance" programme comes to support Jordan in its efforts to become an attractive location for doing business, Director Stephan Wade said at the launching of AMIR.

The programme is implemented by Chemicon International in collaboration with USAID, the ministries of planning and industry and trade as well as the customs department.

With the aim of jump-starting the economy and encouraging more direct

foreign investments, Jordan has introduced a new package of economic legislation such as the new customs, companies and securities laws.

Earlier this year, the government also introduced ambitious amendments to the investment law allowing a 100 per cent foreign equity ownership in six key sectors.

"The macro-economic policy and legislative changes of recent years have made it clear that Jordan wants to be part of the [global integration] process, to find and claim its own economic 'place in the sun' as have nations like Singapore, Costa Rica, and Ireland," said Mr. Wade.

The AMIR programme will support the Investment Promotion Corporation, enhance Jordan's customs system and extend technical assistance to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Office at the Ministry of Industry and Trade to ensure a smooth and enhanced accession of Jordan to the WTO.

Jordan has opened talks with the Geneva-based WTO and hopes to join the

international organisation in the near future.

The programme will also provide Jordan with technical assistance and training to ensure effective implementation of economic policies that will positively support the Kingdom's long term economic growth.

Mr. Wade said the four-year target is to achieve the registration of 1,000 new companies, the creation of 20,000 jobs and the accumulation of \$200 million in new foreign direct investment.

The programme is also aimed at extending sustainable microfinance services for poor and low income entrepreneurs in order to develop and promote sustainable microfinance institutions in Jordan, based on "best practices" from around the world, according to USAID/Jordan Director Lewis Lucke.

"The key here is to extend economic opportunity to segments of the population who don't have it, providing credit that can be used to build and sustain economically viable micro-and small-business operations," Mr. Lucke pointed out.

He indicated that the programme will provide technical assistance and training for NGOs and banks to create Jordanian experts in microfinance.

Mr. Wade said by the end of four years, the programme hopes to give 25,000 loans to micro entrepreneurs, 50 per cent of whom are women and 30 per cent borrowers outside Amman.

He added that AMIR anticipates that commercial banks extend their services to 2,500 borrowers and 12,500 savers.

Jordan has recently launched the multi-million-dollar Social Productivity Programme (SPP) that aims at easing the impact of economic reforms on Jordan's poor and unemployed, said Salem Ghawi, acting secretary general at the Planning Ministry, in his opening address which he delivered on behalf of Planning Minister Rima Khalaf.

He said SPP seeks to improve living conditions of the poor and low-income groups through universal access to public infrastructure and services.

Mr. Ghawi added that SPP

is also geared towards assisting the poor and unemployed in obtaining productive employment or starting their own micro-business through training, employment facilitation and microfinance.

Mr. Wade said throughout the four years, the AMIR programme will also provide support for business associations that represent private entrepreneurs in order to become strong advocates for implementation of policy reforms that support economic growth and equity.

"No modern economy can become competitive without forward looking business organisations," he added.

Mr. Wade concluded by saying that the "speed with which Jordan reaches its economic goals will be determined by the state of mind of individuals at every level whose decisions are essential to effect the vital changes necessary to attract investment and technology, bring jobs, develop skills and expand economic opportunity for all Jordanians."

Hospitals, insurers consider new pricing structure today

By Suha Ma'ayeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The managers of private hospitals met Tuesday with Dr. Ma'moun Ma'abreh, the head of the health insurance department at the Ministry of Health, and discussed with him the new pricing system which, they said, does not reflect the actual treatment costs.

Dr. Mahmoud Taber, the president of the Private Hospitals Society (PHS), said the participants discussed the treatment fees over the past ten years and came to the conclusion that the prices are very low.

The cost of treatment covered by private health insurance funds was last revised in 1991 though most prices are based on an agreement reached in 1982.

Dr. Taber said the attendees set a new strategy to discuss the structuring of prices with officials from the health insurance funds. "We recommended three people to represent the pri-

vate hospitals in a small committee," he added.

Dr. Taber mentioned that another meeting will be held Thursday with officials from the health insurance companies to consider the new cost of treatment for all medical services.

"We hope to reach an agreement in order to raise the current pricing system," he said. "The representatives of the health insurance companies are convinced that the pricing is low."

The president of the soci-

ety stressed that the PHS does not intend to raise prices in a manner which might be too costly for the insurance companies to handle. "We want to examine the possibilities that we

have, in order to reach a compromise," he indicated.

"We do not want to announce our prices before the meeting in order to avoid any unjustified reactions," he concluded.

Transport sector to be restructured before end of this year — Gammoh

AMMAN (J.T.) — Transport and Telecommunications Minister Sami Gammoh Wednesday said the transport sector will undergo a restructuring process before the end of this year.

In a statement to the Arabic daily Al Ra'i, Mr. Gammoh said the ministry is embarking on a reorganisation process covering the public and air transport and

rail road sectors. He added that initial studies and research on the restructuring process have been finalised.

Introducing a new Super Toyota Coaster bus at a special ceremony held at the Royal Automobile Club, Mr. Gammoh said Jordanian experts have participated in building this new coaster.

He stressed the need to focus on local industry and

to encourage it because of its contribution to addressing several social problems, including unemployment which has been on the increase recently.

Mr. Gammoh called for the transformation from consumer market patterns to manufacturing markets, saying that such a shift would result in positive economic changes that will reflect on the local market.

EU set for 11-member single currency

(Continued from page 8)

the Maastricht Treaty, which committed the EU to monetary union.

Wednesday's announcement has been widely anticipated since the end of last year, when it became clear that Italy, against all expectations, had succeeded in cutting its budget deficit to below three per cent of GDP, the crucial benchmark of fiscal discipline laid down at Maastricht.

But only a year ago, as Europe struggled to emerge from recession, few economic analysts would have bet on the euro being launched with more than seven or eight countries.

Finance Commissioner Yves Thibault de Silguy paid tribute to the efforts of EU governments to bring their public finances under control.

"We would have liked to have a rugby team [15 players] but, in a World Cup year, a football team [11] is not too bad," he said.

"This has not happened by chance. It is the result of a repeatedly renewed political commitment, the recovery of our economies and years of effort that have allowed us to achieve a high degree of sustainable convergence."

Greece, which is aiming to join the euro by 2001, was ruled out because its

budget deficit and inflation rates remain significantly above the Maastricht ceilings.

Sweden was disqualified because it has not enacted legislation for a fully independent central bank and is not a member of the European exchange rate mechanism (ERM).

The decision will make no practical difference since Sweden has decided to join Britain and Denmark on the sidelines of monetary union.

It does, however, send a strong signal to Britain that it will be expected to rejoin the ERM as a condition of entering the euro-zone in the future.

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates. Prices as at 25/03/98 17:12									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.8291	0.5976	1.4933	128.68	1.4120	1802.50	2.0818	6.1317
DE Mark	0.5467	-	0.3265	0.8170	70.43	0.7720	865.13	1.1271	3.3520
GB Sterling	1.8736	3.0620	-	2.5010	216.82	2.3630	3016.48	3.4506	10.2622
CH Franc	0.6887	1.2272	0.3993	-	66.18	0.9460	1205.28	1.3747	4.1004
JP Yen	0.0078	1.4196	0.4637	1.1595	-	1.0963	13.98	189.95	4.7587
CA Dollar	0.7082	1.2967	0.4231	1.0588	1.1010	-	1273.63	1.6406	4.3439
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0149	0.3315	0.8828	1401.16	0.7837	-	11.44	3.4021
NL Guilder	0.4850	88.73	0.2895	72.47	62.42	0.6847	873.39	-	2.9722
FR Franc	0.1631	0.2983	0.0974	24.3581	20.98	0.2303	33.62	33.6200	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7090	3.7606	0.3770	3.6392	0.3064	3.6725	1527.20	3.4068
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.2898	0.5317	5.1329	0.4307	5.1798	2164.02	4.8046
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1890	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0814	0.98	407.20	0.9083
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8807	9.9485	-	8.65	0.8100	9.74	4051.04	0.9080
Qatar Dinar	0.2748	0.1948	1.0306	1.0306	-	0.0839	1.01	419.66	0.9361
Kuwait Dinar	3.2748	2.3219	12.2826	1.2346	11.82	-	12.03	5001.47	0.9361
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1931	1.0212	1.0212	0.9909	0.0831	-	415.85	0.9278
Lebanese L1000	0.685	0.4642	2.4558	0.2469	2.3829	0.1999	2.4047	-	2.2305
Egyptian	0.2338	0.2081	1.1010	0.1107	1.0683	0.0895	1.0781	448.32	-

Energy									
Oil	Last	Review							
Brent	13.99	14.10							
W. Texas	15.51	15.48							
Bonny	13.99	14.10							
Dubai	12.08	12.63							
U.L. Gas	153.00	154.00							

Metal Prices									
Metal	Bid	Offer							
Gold (oz's)	299.2	299.7							
Silver (oz's)	6.36	6.39							
Platinum (oz's)	408	410							
AL (3 Months)	1476	1478							
CU (3 Months)	1786	1789							
Zinc (3 Months)	1110	1115							
Lead (3 Months)	568	570							
Ni (3 Months)	5580	5600							

Main Equity Indices									
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls		
New York	DOW JONES	8950.52	46.08	0.52	8959.24	8905.19	8904.44		
New York	S&P 500	1111.99	6.34	0.57	1113.07	1105.65	1105.65		
London	FT-SE 100	5986.3	3.1	0.05	6007.5	5965.2	5983.7		
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	16688.34	51.95	0.31	16838.7	16574.5	16806.4		
Paris	CAC 40	3813.68	75.14	2.01	3814.71	3784.93	3738.54		
Frankfurt	DAX	5096.62	68.38	1.36	5100.18	5058.64	5028.24		

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Israel floats flyover idea for Palestinians

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Israel said on Wednesday it had proposed that a flyover road should be built above a huge swathe of its territory to meet obligations to grant Palestinians safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza strip.

The proposal and an alternative suggestion of a tunnel were immediately dismissed as ridiculous by the Palestinian National Authority. It said they were yet another Israeli government ploy to put obstacles in the way of agreement.

Visiting German politician Gerhard Schröder also laughed off the mooted schemes, which he said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had set out for him during talks on Tuesday.

"It was an interesting arabesque in the discussion," Mr. Schröder told German speaking reporters.

The comments by Mr. Schröder, the opposition Social Democrat candidate for chancellor in Germany's forthcoming elections, were the first word of the proposals.

"That was one suggestion," a senior aide to Mr. Netanyahu, David Bar-Ilan, said of the flyover proposal when asked to comment. "It's easier than a tunnel."

He said security worries meant Israel could not design

some of its own roads as safe passage routes for Palestinians moving to and from Gaza and self-rule areas of the West Bank, a journey as the crow flies of about 40 kilometres.

"Unless it is done in convoys, we can't trust them not to bring terrorists in this way from Gaza and the West Bank. They could depart somewhere along the road and go into the Negev desert," Mr. Bar-Ilan said.

"They are claiming they need an extraterritorial passage. It would be out of the question because it would split Israel in half," he told Reuters.

Safe passage for Palestinians is one of several arrangements agreed by the parties in interim peace deals signed since the 1993 Oslo accords, but yet to be implemented. Among others are the opening of a Palestinian airport and port in Gaza.

None has been put into effect because of disputes over how Israeli security concerns should be satisfied and amid a year-long deadlock in broader peace talks.

Major General Abdel-Razak Al Yahya, the chief Palestinian negotiator on security matters, called the idea of a flyover or tunnel "ridiculous, impractical and illogical."

"We are talking about the

safe passage of people from Gaza to the West Bank and vice versa and not a safe road.

"We have not reached agreement on anything concerning the safe passage and as long as Israel continues to place obstacles, we will not agree," Maj. Gen. Yahya said.

Mr. Bar-Ilan, Mr. Netanyahu's communications adviser, said he did not know whether the proposals had been costed and assumed the money would have to come from international donors.

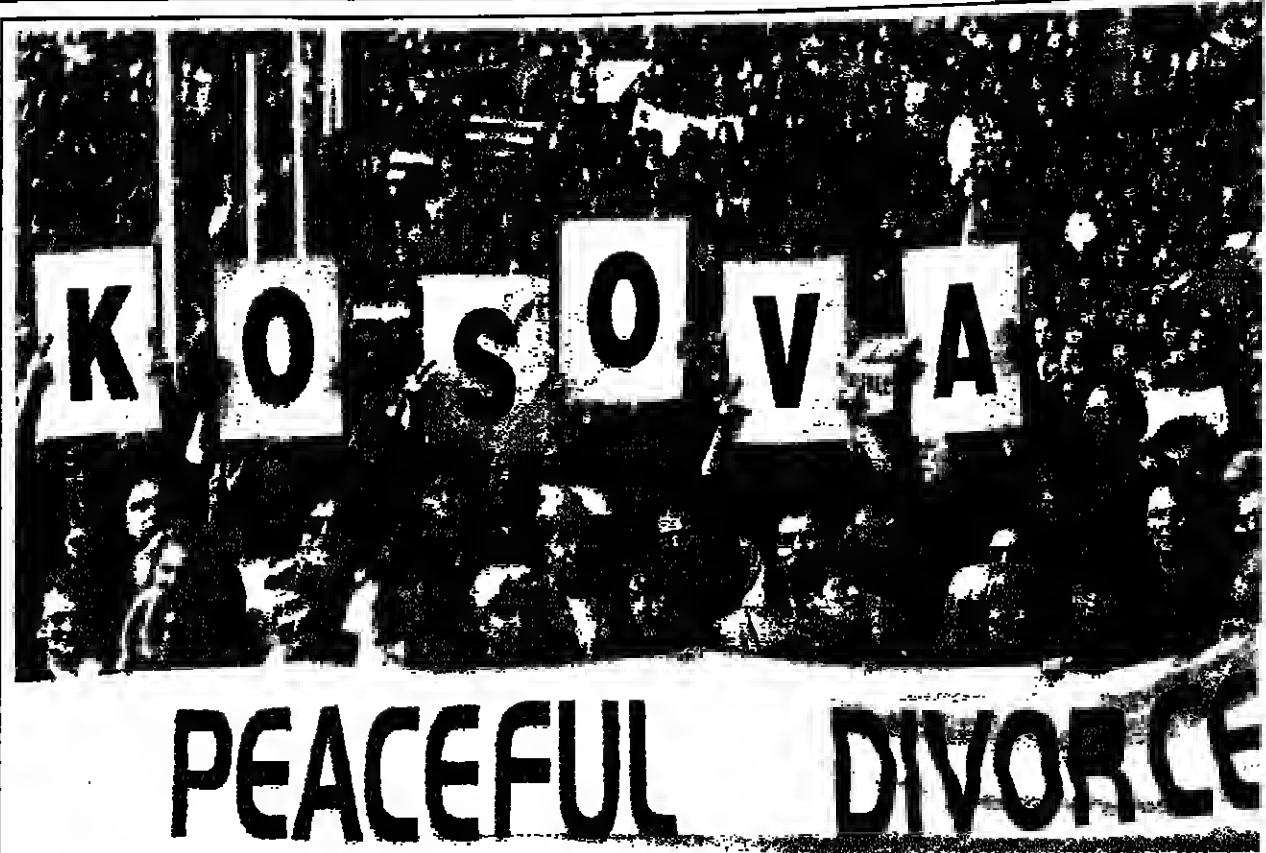
He said either project would make sense only if it formed part of a final peace settlement.

Mr. Schröder said Mr. Netanyahu had himself ruled out a tunnel because of geological constraints "which even he doesn't seem confident can be overcome."

But he said Mr. Netanyahu had "expanded on the so-called flyover idea, a 40 km link between the two areas involved without, if I might put it this way, touching the ground."

"It is certainly an interesting project in theory for the local construction industry, perhaps for the international industry as well, and certainly a great challenge," he said.

"But I doubt, if I dare say so, that it is the right way politically," Mr. Schröder added.



Ethnic Albanian women march with placards as thousands gather in the centre of Pristina Wednesday to protest against Serbian police action against the Albanian population in Serbia's troubled Kosovo province. Fighting between Albanians and Serbian riot forces erupted again Tuesday, leaving at least five Albanians and one Serb dead (AFP photo)

Iraq: U.N. inspectors can meet jailed germ warfare scientist

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq will allow United Nations arms inspectors to meet a top Iraqi germ warfare scientist who was detained for trying to flee the country, an Iraqi source said on Wednesday.

"If the biological team wants to meet him, it can do so. The right of UNSCOM [the U.N. Special Commission] charged with disarming Iraq] will not be affected by his detention," the source, who asked not to be named, said.

"All the documents in his possession have been handed over to the special commission 10 days ago," the source added.

UNSCOM said on Tuesday that Baghdad had recently handed over a batch of documents

said to have been taken from Nasser Hindawi, who pioneered Iraq's biological warfare programme.

"The documents seized from him were scientific reports he himself had taken part in preparing when he was working within the past biological programme," the source said.

UNSCOM said that earlier this month it received a couple of hundred pages of documents said to have been in Hindawi's possession, and a letter from the Iraqi oil minister, Lieutenant-General Amir Mohammad Rasheed. The letter did not say when Hindawi was arrested or where he was planning to defect, UNSCOM said.

UNSCOM, Russian teams progress on spy plane offer

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — Russian and U.N. experts made progress at talks here focusing on a Russian offer of a spy plane to assist U.N. weapons inspectors in Iraq, a U.N. spokesman said Wednesday.

U.N. spokesman Ewen Buchanan told AFP that the "useful" discussions had "narrowed down options" concerning Russia's offer of a reconnaissance aircraft that would supplement the U-2 plane loaned by Washington to the U.N. Special Commission.

Russian diplomats said that the discussions determined that an Antonov-130, equipped with special sensors, could be of use to the U.N. inspectors verifying the elimination of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

The technical teams were led by UNSCOM legal officer John Scott and Defence Ministry Rear Admiral Valentin Kuznetsov at the two-day talks at UNSCOM's U.N. headquarters.

Mr. Buchanan said that further consultations would be required before a final agreement was reached.

Russian Defence Minister Igor Sergeev suggested replacing the U-2 with a Russian plane on Jan. 15 amid the ongoing crisis with Iraq over the U.N. weapons inspections.

However, UNSCOM insisted that any aircraft would be in addition to the U.S. plane, which flies at higher altitudes and performs different tasks than aircraft proposed by other countries.

Gere calls for a Western coalition to pressure China

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Actor Richard Gere called for a coalition of Western powers to pressure China over Tibet. Gere, after meeting six Tibetans on their 14th day of a fast unto-death for self-determination, said governments and organisations should take up the campaign. "It is up to the West to live up to its words and form a coalition to deal with China," the actor told a news conference in Delhi after arriving from Dharamsala, the Tibetan exile government-in-exile.

"China must be pushed constantly... Each country must raise its voice because Tibet has been extraordinarily abused and requires our protection," said.

Canada's 'Siesta' Senator resigns, picks up pension

OTTAWA (R) — Canada's "Siesta" Senator, famous for long bouts of absenteeism in Mexico, has resigned six weeks after he was unceremoniously suspended from the Canadian senate. The senate had stripped Senator Andrew Thompson of his 64,400 Canadian dollar annual salary in February because he had appeared only a handful of times since it began taking attendance in 1990. But by resigning, Thompson will now be able to collect a 48,000 Canadian dollar annual pension, two years earlier than if he had waited until the mandatory retirement age of 75. Thompson, 73, had said his chronic absenteeism was due to poor health, though photographers stalking his residence at La Paz, Mexico, saw a well-tanned man running errands with no apparent difficulty.

Talk show guest drops pants 'to fight sexual repression'

LONDON (AFP) — A young man pulled his pants down during a live BBC television broadcast on infidelity to show Britons how to shake off sexual repression. Alex Leroy, 25, was the main guest on the programme hosted by Robert Kilroy-Silk with the theme, "Is Infidelity Genetic?" Leroy bragged that he had cheated on his girlfriend with at least five other women, the Guardian reported. Things got out of hand when Leroy suddenly stood up, dropped his trousers and proclaimed: "We are all sexually repressed in this country. If we weren't, we'd all have our clothes off." The host of the programme apologised to viewers and the BBC insisted the stunt was not planned.

Magpies pelt Netherlands capital with pebbles

THE HAGUE (AFP) — Stone-throwing magpies are causing havoc in The Hague by pelting cars with pebbles, a city council spokesman said. The council has erected boards in the city to warn residents of the danger, saying: "Watch Out! Stone-throwing magpies. Park at your own risk." The birds pick up polished pebbles, which often lie on the sidewalks, and carry them to their nests. At some point during flight, they apparently lose interest in their booty and shower the city with stones. Several cars have been dented and at least two windshields have been cracked by the flying pebbles. The council has identified the culprit. The magpies will be caught and released outside the city, the spokesman said.

Israeli military moves to Lebanon

JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Israeli defence forces moved to Lebanon on Wednesday, according to a report in the West Bank. The report said that the Israeli army had moved into the town of Hama, near the border with Lebanon. The report also said that the Israeli army had moved into the town of Hama, near the border with Lebanon.

Arafat: U.S. wants Europe to delay Mideast peace initiative

BEIRUT (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said on Wednesday the United States asked for a postponement of an EU initiative to push forward the Israeli-Palestinian track of the Middle East peace process.

Mr. Arafat said the European initiative "was postponed in order to pave the way for American proposals... of which we have not yet been officially informed," reported the London-based Ashraf Al Awas newspaper.

"Israel does not want any European initiative to suc-

ceed, which explains its attitude during the visit of British Foreign Minister Robin Cook to Israel," Mr. Arafat said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cancelled a March 16 dinner with Mr. Cook after the British minister toured the site of a Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem where he met an official of the Palestinian National Authority.

Mr. Arafat said he informed U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, who visited Gaza on Monday, of "Israeli violations of the accords reached in

Washington under the auspices of the two co-sponsors [the United States and Russia], the European Union, Norway and in the presence of Japan and Egypt."

"These texts in which Israel vows not to construct any new building, finance the construction of settlements, expand settlements... are international accords, not bilateral, and were submitted to the United Nations," he said.

Mr. Arafat warned that if Israel fails to respect the accords, he will seek redress at the United Nations.

Housing starts in Israel fall 10%

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Housing starts inside Israel dropped 10 per cent in 1997 at a time when the government was engaged in a controversial policy of building units for Jews in occupied Arab areas, according to official figures released Wednesday.

The government's central bureau of statistics said construction of 50,850 homes began during the year, compared to 54,440 in 1996, a 10 per

cent decrease.

The 1997 figure was 26 per cent below the number of housing starts in 1995.

The fall in home building inside Israel has coincided with the expansion of Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip, West Bank and Arab east Jerusalem under the right-wing government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, which came to office in mid-1996.

Rejecting widespread

international condemnation, Mr. Netanyahu has authorised the construction of several thousand housing units in the settlements.

The launch of one new Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem a year ago sparked a breakdown in peace talks with the Palestinians, who view settlement construction as an attempt to strengthen Israel's hold on occupied land.

Libyan court to try former CIA chief over 1986 Tripoli bombing

LONDON (AFP) — A Libyan criminal court is to try the former chief of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and seven other Americans in their absence on murder charges, Libyan Television reported Tuesday.

The charges against former CIA chief William Casey, undercover agent Colonel Oliver North and others result from the punitive U.S. raids on Tripoli and Benghazi in April 1986, the television said. Monitored by the BBC, the television quoted a statement from the Libyan public prosecutor, read at a magistrates court in Tripoli in the presence of relatives of those who died in the raids.

It said the accused had committed acts of "random killing, premeditated killing, attempted premeditated killing, causing disasters, transgression against public safety and instilling fear into people."

"On April 15, 1986, in Tripoli and Benghazi, with the intention of killing, the defendants engaged in acts liable to endanger public safety," the statement said. "They dropped from their aircraft a number of bombs and missiles over Tripoli, Benghazi and their suburbs, with the intention of killing people at random, destroying houses and damaging others," it added.

"The public prosecutor, the defendants and those who have brought the law suits are required to submit immediately the list of witnesses whom they want to hear before the court," the television said.

Turkey, Arab states dispute need for accords on water

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Turkey and nearby Arab countries disagreed over the need for an international accord to solve their water-sharing dispute as they met here during the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) conference.

Lebanese Agriculture Minister Chawki Fakhour said the disagreement broke out Wednesday between the Turkish delegation and those of Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia.

He quoted Turkish Agriculture Minister Mustafa Tasar as telling his counterparts that the region's countries "do not need international accords" on water sharing.

The Lebanese minister told Mr. Tasar that the region "must take inspiration from international accords" applying the concept of "international waters" to dis-

puted water resources.

Turkey is locked in a water-sharing dispute with Syria and Iraq, which have accused it of limiting the amount of water flowing from Turkish highlands down the Euphrates River.

Agriculture ministers and representatives from 29 countries are meeting here to discuss water and food security issues in a conference which began at the expert level on Saturday.

Clinton's African summit ends with call for action against genocide

ENTEBBE (AFP) — A summit between U.S. President Bill Clinton and heads of state from east and central Africa ended here Wednesday with an "Entebbe Declaration" calling for action to prevent further genocide.

Mr. Clinton said the summit had also agreed to "solve conflicts before they explode into crises," and acknowledged that "there is no single blueprint for a successful democracy."

That was taken as a bow to the various forms of government represented at the "Entebbe Summit for Peace and Prosperity" in this town on the shores of Lake Victoria, 40 kilometres west of Kampala.

Taking part with Mr. Clinton

were the presidents of Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda, the Ethiopian prime minister and the Zimbabwean finance minister.

The seven-page Entebbe Declaration said the United States and the regional countries would begin exploring, within one month, the creation of an international coalition against genocide.

The leaders pledged to undertake "a concerted effort" to prevent the recurrence of genocide, and "to work together to prohibit future atrocities in the Great Lakes region, including those aided and abetted by external arms suppliers."

The declaration also said the

leaders would seek to: — define and build a U.S.-Africa partnership for the 21st century;

— define strategies to integrate Africa into the world economy that would be "as flexible and creative as those applied to post-war Europe and Asia;

— strengthen and sustain regional security and African peacekeeping capacity;

— continue cooperative efforts to resist all forms of cross-border terrorism directed against civilians;

— pursue dialogue on democratisation while recognising that "there is no fixed model for democratic institutions or transformation."

Algiers archdiocese appeals for clemency for murderers

ALGIERS (AFP) — The archbishop of Algiers on Wednesday appealed for clemency for seven Islamist militants sentenced to death for the 1996 murder of the Roman Catholic bishop of Oran.

"It is natural for the courts to do their duty to protect society, but we do not want the death sentence to be carried out," Archbishop Teissier said in an interview on state radio. "There

is a problem with the death sentence especially since those convicted were not directly responsible for the murder but were accomplices," he added.

Bishop Pierre Claverie was killed with his driver Mohammad Bouchikhi when a bomb exploded in the bishop's palace of Oran in western Algeria on Aug. 1, 1996.

Bishop Claverie was returning

home after a meeting with the then French Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette, who was visiting Algeria. Archbishop Teissier said he had spoken by telephone with the victim's sister and she as well as friends of the murdered bishop shared his feeling.

Algeria's bishops on Tuesday issued a statement also appealing for clemency.

Korda and Rusedski bow out

KEY BISCAIYNE (AFP) — Petr Korda and Greg Rusedski bowed out of the Lipton Tennis Championships Tuesday, their hopes of supplanting Pete Sampras as the world No. 1 dashed by fourth-round defeats.

Britain's Tim Henman took care of Korda, the world No. 2 and reigning Australian Open champion, 6-4, 6-4.

Sweden's Thomas Enqvist made even shorter work of Rusedski, the 1997 U.S. Open runner-up, 6-2, 6-2.

The departures of Korda and Rusedski, who joined Sampras himself on the upset list, left Chile's Marcelo Rios as the only player with a hope of topping from the top of the rankings with a victory



Venus Williams of the U.S. chases down a volley from Silvia Farina of Italy in the first set of their quarterfinal match at the Lipton Championships. Williams, seeded 11th in the tournament, defeated 29th seed Farina 6-1 6-2 (Reuters photo)

whose disappointing start to 1998 included five first-round defeats.

"It's great to be back winning and playing the tennis I'm capable of. It's something I've got to continue. Not just for a couple of weeks, I've got to be able to maintain these high levels to go to the heights that I want to go."

Sixth-seeded Russian Yevgeni Kafelnikov was also upset on Tuesday, falling 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 to American Jeff Tarango.

In the quarter-finals he'll meet resurgent American Andre Agassi, who defeated Spain's Albert Costa 7-6 (7/5), 4-6, 6-1.

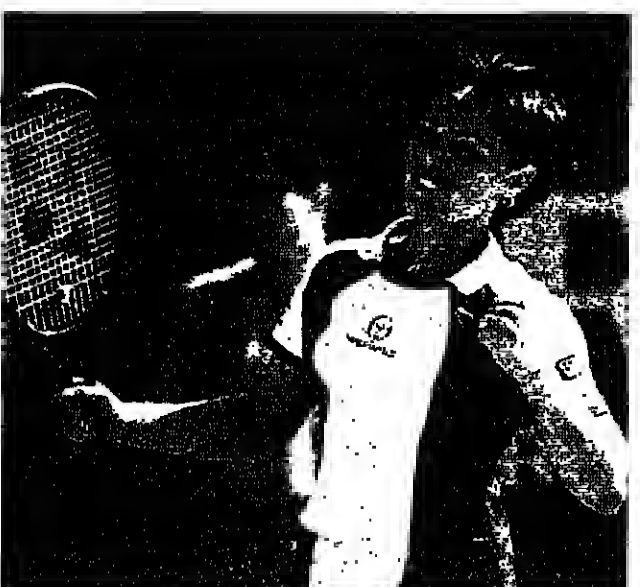
Agassi, a three-time champion here in 1990, 1995 and 1996, tied Sweden's Stefan Edberg for the most singles match wins

in tournament history. The women's competition served to reaffirm the ascent of the teenage champions.

Russian Anna Kournikova, who eliminated fifth-seeded American Monica Seles on Monday, turned around and ousted ninth-seeded Spaniard Conchita Martinez 6-3, 6-0 Tuesday in a fourth-round match.

American Serena Williams, also 16 and ranked 40th in the world, took World No. 1 Martina Hingis to the limit, but the Swiss 17-year-old survived two match points to beat Williams 6-3, 1-6, 7-6 (7/4) and earn a semifinal berth.

In the semis, Hingis will face Serena's slightly older sister, Venus Williams, who defeated Italian Silvia Farina 6-1, 6-2.



Top seed Martina Hingis of Switzerland reacts after winning match point in her quarterfinal match against unseeded Serena Williams. Williams, who gave Hingis the toughest match so far in the tournament, lost to Hingis 6-3 1-6 7-6 (7-4) (Reuters photo)

British unveil campaign to keep hooligans out of World Cup

LONDON (AFP) — Britain on Wednesday unveiled a million-pound (\$1.6 million) campaign aimed at deterring ticketless football fans and hooligans from travelling to France in June-July for the World Cup.

Interior Minister Jack Straw presented two television advertisements, one featuring an English fan and the other a Scot, both in full supporter's regalia, who are turned away from a match after trying to get in with a ticket stamped with the name "Jean Pierre Baptiste" and bought on the black market.

The campaign, supported by former England striker Gary Lineker, will run from Wednesday until May 12.

It is aimed at countering fears in Britain and abroad that the tournament will present an opportunity for the re-emergence of football hooliganism, long associated with the British fan.

The problem has been exacerbated by a severe shortage of tickets for foreign fans imposed by French tournament organisers, which many fear will drive a fevered black market and an uncontrolled ticket distribution.

"The best advice we can give to supporters is 'No ticket, don't travel'," said Straw.

"Even if someone is willing to run the risk of selling a ticket, the chances of getting into the ground will be slim, and the purchaser runs the risk of

missing the match, a heavy fine or even imprisonment.

"If your name is Joe Bloggs and the name on the ticket says Josephine Jospin, you won't get in."

Questioned further, however, Straw admitted that tickets sold to British fans would not carry the buyer's name.

Given the scarcity of tickets for British fans, Straw said it was "extremely unlikely that anyone in this country will sell on their ticket."

Asked whether the rarity of tickets would not in fact increase their black market value, Straw said this was not his understanding of human behaviour.

Straw added he did not know whether French match officials at stadium turnstiles would check names on tickets against other identification.

Indeed, conditions for first round match tickets, which went on sale in France last year, did not prohibit tickets being bought for a group of friends under one person's name. So, presumably, an English fan who got hold of such a ticket on the black market would be able to claim at the turnstile he had bought the ticket legitimately through a friend.

Straw repeated his "anxiety" that vast television screens erected outside stadia would be "magnets" for ticketless fans and hooligans, adding he had discussed the issue several times with French counterpart Jean-Pierre Chevenement.

"We cannot stop people from travelling, we cannot guarantee there will be no trouble, all we can do is continue with the advice," said Straw.

"Some people will not accept that but I think many will."

British and French police are sharing intelligence on known hooligans and British football intelligence officers who know potential troublemakers by sight will also be present at games.

Straw said the campaign would send "a clear message to the hooligan that the World Cup will not provide him with a hiding place ... he is not welcome and his loutish cowardly behaviour will not be tolerated."

"The government is committed to promoting the interests of respectable football supporters and is determined to prevent a hooligan minority from bringing disgrace on our country."

Britain has already opened a telephone hotline for the public to tell police of their suspicions of planned hooligan activity and is encouraging courts to impose travel restrictions on fans convicted of violence.

In a separate development, 29 men were arrested Wednesday in a series of dawn raids in Sunderland in the north east of England as part of a long-term investigation of football violence, police said.

Gascoigne ditches Rangers for Middlesbrough

MIDDLESBROUGH (AFP) — England star Paul Gascoigne abandoned involvement in Glasgow Rangers' bid for a record 10th successive Scottish title when he joined English first division side Middlesbrough on Tuesday.

The 30-year-old midfielder joined Bryan Robson's team, currently pushing for promotion to the English Premiership, for a fee of £3 million (\$4.8 million) on a three-and-a-half-year deal.

The former Newcastle, Tottenham and Lazio star will miss out on Rangers' faltering bid for the Scottish title this season and could make his debut in Sunday's League Cup final against Chelsea at Wembley.

But Gascoigne's advisor Mel Stein said quitting Rangers was one of the toughest decisions the England midfielder has had to make in his controversial career.

"He is very, very sad to be leaving Rangers. It's an enormous wrench. Paul said to me 'I've left clubs before, but I've never been so sad about leaving a club.'"

"But he's looking forward. He's looking forward to the League Cup final on Sunday, he's looking forward to the promotion push, he's looking forward to the World Cup and he's looking forward to playing in the Premier League next year."

Boro manager Bryan Robson beat off competition for Gascoigne from Premiership club Crystal Palace, who had also agreed a three million pound fee.

Robson said: "I'm delighted Gazza is joining us. He's a great player and our fans will be really excited about watching him play."

"He'll travel down tomorrow from Scotland and join the lads in training. He'll go for his medical in the next few days."

The Boro boss hinted that Gascoigne might be involved against Chelsea.

Robson said Gascoigne's arrival underlined Boro's determination to build a squad capable of making a major impact in the Premiership.

Boro, currently second in the First Division, are well placed to secure an instant return to the top flight and Robson said: "We want to keep trying to improve as a football club. When you bring quality players in like Paul Gascoigne, you're hoping you can improve."



Japan's Kyoto City (L), a longshot by British bookmakers, is put through the paces during early morning training March 25 at Nad Al Sheba track by jockey Mikio Matsunaga alongside a lead horse prior to the \$4 million Dubai World Cup. Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes champion Silver Charm of the United States is favourite to outrun nine other world class thoroughbreds over 2,000 metres of floodlit dirt on Saturday night to take home the \$2.4 million first prize, which would double the four-year-old colt's lifetime earnings at a stroke (Reuters photo)



Andre Agassi of the U.S. returns a first set serve from Alberto Costa of Spain during their fourth round match at the Lipton Championships (Reuters photo)

here. "Rios, winner of the Champions Cup at Indian Wells the week before the Lipton, defeated Croatian Goran Ivanisevic 6-2, 6-3.

Henman, his energy and his touch recovered after a disappointing start to the year, did a big favour for Sampras, who was eliminat-

ed by South African Wayne Ferreira on Monday, the day that he began his 102nd straight week atop the world rankings.

"It's an interesting situation with the guys, Korda, Rafter, Rios, Greg, maybe in the next few weeks all pushing for No. 1. I think it's very good for the game," said Henman,

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ANNOUNCEMENT

The Binational Fulbright Commission in Jordan has abolished the Program Officer position advertised on 7 March 1998. A new position has been created and the Commission invites qualified candidates to apply. Applications, already submitted for the previous position will be reviewed and pre-selected for interview consideration based on the minimum requirements stated below:

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